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GERMANY'S SPRING OFFENSIVE

THOUGH the Nazis' part in the Finnish collapse has been indirect, it has been sufficient to enable them to claim it as a signal defeat of Western diplomacy, and a proof that British and French influence has been purged from Scandinavia. To overlook this and to neglect its influence on world opinion is to refuse to face the realities. Germany's spring offensive advances; which field of diplomatic or physical warfare Hitler will next choose he is not obliging enough to inform us. While he can continue to mop up Europe without sacrificing German lives, he has no need for a frontal attack either on our civilians or on the Maginot Line. Ever since the failure of the Munich putsch, he has preferred the "constitutional methods" of internal aggression to violent assault, and has only used his army when victory has been assured by other means. Diplomacy will remain his chief weapon, so long as he can rely on the indecision of the governments opposed to him. This is the explanation of von Ribbentrop's journey to Rome. It was not caused, as silly optimists would have us believe, by any anxiety for peace as a way out of a predicament, or any feverish desire to break an Italian neutrality of great utility to Germany. On the contrary, we suspect that Mr. Sumner Welles will report a strong desire for peace in every capital except Berlin, where he probably discovered that diplomacy is inspired by a growing confidence in out and out victory and a more avowed determination to destroy the world position of the Western Powers. What particular form Germany's spring offensive takes is relatively unimportant. What we must grasp is that we are faced by an opponent whose every move is an assault or the preparation for an assault upon ourselves. German diplomacy towards a truce or an offensive is in the ascendant because it knows precisely what it wants; British diplomacy fails because it only reacts to Nazi initiative. Surprised by each new assault, it fumbles for makeshift defences when defence is already too late. The moral is clear. Defend nothing which you are not determined to defend with all your forces: and above all discover those positive objectives of policy on which Western civilisation depends and stand by them in victory, stalemate or truce. Only when these are known and leaders have been found who believe in them is the diplomatic or physical counter-attack possible.

German Propaganda in Spain

The Catholic Herald has recently protested against the employment by the Ministry of Information of Republican Spaniards. This complaint is the more remarkable when we remember that whereas Republicans have very good reason for being anti-Nazi, the Nationalists, though

a few are pro-ally, are for the most part lukewarm or pro-Nazi, as the messages of some London correspondents of Spanish newspapers clearly show. Moreover, although General Franco has strictly forbidden editors to make any use of Government broadcasts from belligerent countries or other official sources, the Spanish press is overwhelmingly pro-Nazi in tone. At a recent meeting of the Friends of Spain, the Marquis de Moral stated that no less than 206 persons are at work on propaganda in the German Embassy in Spain. This seems to indicate that the Caudillo's ban on foreign propaganda has its blind spot. We are now negotiating a Trade Agreement with Nationalist Spain, and it is to be hoped that it will benefit both sides. To enable our negotiators to work in a more friendly atmosphere, it might be wise to suggest to General Franco that his controlled press—more strictly controlled than even the German or Italian—should observe some semblance of neutrality!

The Air Estimates and Civil Aviation

In the debate last Thursday, neither Sir Kingsley Wood nor the House showed much interest in the lamentable state of our Civil Aviation. Beyond stating that he had hopes—we have very good reasons for thinking they will not be realised—of resuming the Transatlantic Service, and that, by courtesy of General Franco, a land-service to Lisbon may be possible, Sir Kingsley Wood had little to say. He did not show any realisation of the urgent need, in the interests of prestige and exports alike, of a Balkan service; nor was he unduly perturbed by the fact that the Indian service has had to be halved through a shortage of machines. It is indeed remarkable that the loss of the *Hannibal* near the Persian Gulf has not caused more angry comment. *Hannibal* was ten years old and was last heard of travelling at a speed of 77 miles an hour. Because there is no policy of replacement, British civil aviation is forced to use these antiquated machines on its imperial routes and is rapidly losing the good name it had built up in the past. And this will continue so long as civil aviation remains under the control of a Service Department, which is uninterested in its development. We would again urge that it should be transferred to the Board of Trade and, even more important, that the appointed day be fixed on which the Corporation, established months ago, should begin to function.

Education in the Army

Mr. Stanley's speech, presenting the Army Estimates, made a good impression. It showed a genuine concern for the welfare of the troops, and a modest humanity which pleased the House of Commons. Though Labour speakers could, from their specialised knowledge, indicate some weak points in the new scales of allowances, they obviously felt that the Minister had done well. Far the most important subject, however, which was touched on in the Debate was Army Education. Mr. Stanley has wisely decided not to reconstruct the Army Education Corps on its old lines but to give room for a liberal experiment which may well be one of the major developments of the war. Already there is evidence that the morale of the new army can be reinforced by lectures and wireless discussion groups—the men who are now serving have independent minds and want to know what they are fighting for—and that propaganda, in the bad sense of the word, is useless for this purpose. But beside this political education, there is room for vocational training, for handicrafts and cultural activities. The success of such a scheme will depend on the quality of the regional Educational Officers—dugouts will do more harm than good—and on co-operation between them and the Regional Committees set up by the Universities and the voluntary societies. Neither the army nor the adult education movement can tackle the job alone: working together they could be of untold mutual benefit. Everything depends on the men selected to organise the experiment, and we hope that Mr. Stanley will aim high.

The Patriotism of the Milk Trade

Some time ago the Minister of Health encouraged local authorities to submit schemes for supplying milk to nursing and expectant mothers and to children under five at reduced rates. It was intended that the cost should range from nothing in the neediest cases to 2*d.* a pint, and that the margin between the price to the consumer and the wholesale price should be borne by the rates. Before the war it was suggested that Councils should pay to distributors 8*d.* a gallon, but this has now been increased to 9*d.* to meet increased costs. Unfortunately in many areas the scheme is being blocked by the obstinacy of the distributors who refuse to do business unless they get 11*d.* a gallon, and by the attitude of Councils which argue that war is no time for experiments in social welfare. Both objections are mischievous. If we talk of an iron ration, is there anywhere where it is more necessary than in the supply of milk, at prices they can afford, to mothers and young children? As for the distributors' argument that they need 11*d.* to make a reasonable profit, it should be observed that the local authority advertises the scheme, conducts the inquiry on which the list of customers is based, verifies the supply, verifies the use of the milk, pays the distributors and makes the necessary claims on the Milk Marketing Board. In brief, it bears all the overheads of the scheme and presents the distributors with a new guaranteed market, at a time when the rising cost of living is making it difficult for many families to buy the milk they need. In spite of this the distributors in many areas are holding out for their pound of flesh. It is outrageous that a middleman interest should be thus permitted to fleece the ratepayer and jeopardise the nation's health.

Insult to Injury

Mr. Chamberlain's woodenness of mind has seldom been more clearly illustrated than in his belated reply to the Trades Union Congress General Council on the subject of the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Act of 1927. It is a plain fact that this statute, passed shortly after the General Strike, was in many of its provisions punitive and vindictive, as well as designed to score a party advantage for the Conservatives. The political levy clause especially had nothing whatever to do with the General Strike; and the clauses restricting picketing and compelling the Unions of Civil Servants to sever all connections with the rest of the Trade Union movement were unjustified and are naturally resented. Moreover, the definition of "illegal strikes" is admittedly so ambiguous as to leave the entire matter to the judges. The Act, on any showing, needs drastic amendment; and the simplest course would

be to repeal it altogether. Mr. Chamberlain, however, has not merely rejected outright the demand for any modification until after the war, but has at any rate given the appearance of holding out the prospect of amendment as a good conduct prize for the Trade Unions if they behave themselves to the bitter end. This is insult added to injury. The *Times* has been moved to protest against the Prime Minister's attitude. If the Trade Unions press their claims judiciously, they should be able to obtain important and legitimate concessions.

The Case of the Canals

In view of the serious congestion on the railways, it is obvious that the fullest use ought to be made of alternative methods of transport. But, as Mr. George Cadbury points out in a letter to the *Times*, nothing has yet been done to mobilise the canals for war service, though they are plainly capable of relieving the pressure on the railways, especially in connection with the carriage of heavy goods, such as coal and building materials. Canals were brought under unified control in the last war; and it seems clear that the same methods should be applied now, including, of course, the sections owned by the railway companies. The correct procedure would surely be to apply to the canal service the same principle of unified control and guaranteed revenue as the Government have already applied—albeit with undue generosity—to the railways. Otherwise, the Government will be, in effect, subsidising the railway companies at the expense of the canals, which will be unable to meet increased running costs by raising their charges in face of subsidised railway competition. It may suit the railway companies to leave the canals in their present plight; but the case for developing them in the public interest seems both incontestable and urgent.

The Murder of Sir Michael O'Dwyer

Cold-blooded murder at a public meeting in London is fortunately rare. After the first shock is over and the natural sympathy has been expressed for the relatives of Sir Michael O'Dwyer and the others who were wounded by the assassin's bullets, it will be necessary to take very careful account of the consequences of this outrage. We know nothing yet of the motives or circumstances of the murderer, but whatever lies behind his act there is no doubt that the world will interpret it in the light of the Anglo-Indian situation. In the minds of Indians the name of Sir Michael O'Dwyer is ineradicably associated with Amritsar and Lord Zetland's with a refusal to realise the justice of India's indignation at being brought into a "war for freedom" without consultation and without the promise that her own freedom will be its outcome. This murder may be a serious setback to Indian aspirations and it will be the task of sanity to see that it is not followed by panic and reaction in India. Few English people realise how large a part India plays in world opinion. It is a shadow which John Bull carries about with him. As an Irish Protestant Peer remarked a few days ago in speaking of the folly of the execution of I.R.A. leaders: "British Conservatism has not discovered how to deal with Ireland after two centuries of rule." A similar comment may be made on British rule in India. Will the historian of the future have to record that it was not the Nazis but the British ruling class which destroyed the British Empire?

THAT GERMANY

Reactions to Lord Tavistock

Lord Tavistock is one of those amateur politicians, whom one frequently meets in England. They vegetate between the parties and spend their time acquiring a dubious reputation through remarkable personal tours. . . . We can add to the official dementi the following comment. German intentions for the coming Spring are very different from the picture drawn of them in England. The Führer's latest declarations include no peace plans and recognise but one solution, to prosecute the war on which the other side decided, ruthlessly and with every means, until victory is attained. All the stories of our peace plans are only a comfortable method employed by our opponents of fabricating a degree of strength and determination which they in no way possess.

Hamburger Fremdenblatt. 2.3.40.

On Rumours of a Nazi Peace-plan

Bad nerves have never been reckoned as evidence of strength and self-confidence, particularly in wartime. When the politics of bad nerves becomes a system and when embarrassment causes repeated attempts to be made to dictate to the opponent his next step, a perfectly clear answer seems to be necessary. . . . The editors in Fleet Street, who have allowed such a swindle to be put over on them by the British Ministry of Information, would have done better to have listened in to the Führer's speech at Munich. Then these gentlemen might have realised that there are no bad nerves on the German side, no fumbling round for war aims and no hysterical reactions. . . . We march straight along our own road, prepared for every sacrifice which may be necessary.

Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung. 29.2.40.

Germany and the Finnish Conflict

Germany had nothing to do either with the causes or the course of this war. It did not harry Finland into the conflict. It is not Germany's business to consider how Finland can get out of it. The Finnish Government, in spite of the example of Poland, has allowed itself to be manoeuvred into this war by the vague promises of the Western Powers, although the Finnish people must do all the fighting. What the result of the war will be no one can doubt; and a few comforting words by the English and French will make no difference to it.

Völkischer Beobachter.

1914 Compared with 1940

Then the world stood united against Germany and her allies; to-day England and France fight alone against Greater Germany; and the neutrals, among whom are three great powers closely allied to Germany, have a quite different centre of balance. Moreover, England's disregard of neutral rights has driven them to a more active policy. In the world war we were compelled to fight on two fronts and only in 1918 could we turn ourselves against the Western Powers with all our forces. But already by then hundreds of thousands of Americans had arrived. In this war, our Eastern security has been achieved through the lightning campaign against Poland, which followed the immobilisation of the Czechoslovak State as a factor of encirclement.

Hamburger Fremdenblatt. 2.3.40.

The German Minority in Poland

The Committee of Imperial Defence has closed down all the organisations, guilds, societies, co-operatives and other businesses of the Germans in Poland. A commissar to be appointed by the Ministry of the Interior will carry out the liquidation of the above-named organisations. The re-establishment of any organisation by the Germans in Poland will be punished with imprisonment or fines.

Baseler Nationdlzeitung. 6.3.40.

An Italian Officer Speaks to the Hitler Youth

Captain Bodini said: Our friendship is strong and permanent. It is rooted in the heart of the youth of both peoples and above all in that high aim which we possess and towards which we march, radically to reconstruct the old *status quo* in order that a peace based upon justice may be established and secured in the world. . . . Heil to the Führer! Heil to the Duce!

Völkischer Beobachter. 2.3.40.

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THE MORAL OF FINLAND

THE results of the Finnish acceptance of Moscow's terms will be far reaching and exceedingly unpleasant. This is a reason for facing them and not for pretending that facts are not what they are.

The Finns have lost the independence for which they have fought with such immense gallantry against terrific odds. In doing so they have saved their country from further devastation; their forest and peat land will not now be destroyed by fire, their remaining towns and civilian population will be spared destruction from the air. But the terms make it clear that their economy and national policy will now be controlled from Moscow, just as the government of Prague was controlled from Berlin after the seizure of the Sudeten areas. Among the more significant clauses are the apparently minor concessions which give Soviet agents the right of free transit to Norway and provide for a new railway to Sweden. Whether Stalin will, like Hitler, wish to move his frontiers now that he has gained the strategical security which was apparently the original motive for the war we shall see. Expanding empires are apt, as they advance, to feel they must have more territory in order to secure the new territory they have acquired. If Leningrad was menaced from Viipuri and Hango, these new possessions may in their turn seem insufficiently defended against attack from Helsinki and elsewhere. The make-belief Kuusinen government has disappeared during the negotiations, but Mr. Kuusinen is still writing articles in the Soviet press. One's guess about the future of Finland depends on one's estimate of Stalin's motives. It is clear that he will be in a position to absorb the whole of Finland and Sovietise it at any time he wishes.

The Swedes and Norwegians have saved their soil from the devastation of warfare; they have not saved their neutrality. If the German press claims that the significance of this treaty is that Germany has won her first great battle of the war, the battle for the neutrals, they are at least justified in Northern Europe; and there is no doubt that their success in Scandinavia will be felt in the Balkans and throughout the world. Small countries which rose belligerently and made determined gestures of self-defence when they watched the gallantry of the Finns, will now tend to feel that self-defence is impossible and that the arm of the democracies, even when the will is there, cannot extend powerfully enough or far enough to give them aid. In Sweden a large part of the common people was anxious to aid their Finnish neighbours, but neither Sweden nor Norway has fought for centuries; and both countries are so civilised that serious political opposition to the government has ceased to be the custom; comfort and good trade are the dominant political objects. As in the last war, so in this, the geographical relationship of Sweden to Germany makes it far easier for her to fall into the German orbit rather than into the allied. The government, commanding but very small forces, has one powerful asset which is, in these predatory times, also a source of danger. Germany relies on a supply of iron ore mined far up in the north of Sweden. The Swedes may hope to avoid war on their territory by supplying Germany with all she needs; the price will be that her entire economy, and indeed probably the very shape and personnel of her government, will be dictated by the Nazis. Nazi maps of Europe have long shown Scandinavia as a German sphere of influence. If the Swedes avoid the rule of the Gestapo they will indeed be lucky. It is now less likely that Scandinavia will either ask or receive allied help in the future. Norway, democratic and strongly proletarian in feeling, may suffer still more severely than Sweden. It would have been far easier for Britain to have intervened in a popular cause, sanctioned by international law than to justify any future intervention for mainly strategic reasons. That part of the Scandinavian population which would have welcomed allied intervention for Finland might support its own government in opposing what would now look like British aggression. Here indeed is a very possible source of further trouble for the Scandinavian Powers. Strategically it was possible for Britain and France to allow Finland to be defeated, it would be strategically catastrophic for them to permit a German or Russian naval base on the Atlantic coast.

The diplomacy of the last few weeks does not explain these events. Once Britain and France had failed to make use of the revulsion of feeling in Scandinavia against the German-Soviet Pact and failed to explain why we could not aid the Poles—the Ministry of Information seems not to have tried to explain the simple strategical facts in Scandinavia—this result was probably inevitable. Going back one stage further, it is clear that Powers like Norway and Sweden could only have defended their independence against Totalitarianism if the great Powers had had the foresight and the courage to make a reality of the collective security system. They would then have been knit not by the loose and particularist arrangements of Oslo, but as part of a strong alliance which would automatically defend itself against attack. For years the British have taken for granted that Sweden, and to a far greater extent Norway, must necessarily be guided by their trade and financial dependence on Britain. We have grossly neglected propaganda and never even discussed the problem of defence.

The Nazis, on the other hand, have been extremely active. They have relied on the pacific nature of the Swedes and Norwegians, on the fear of Russia which among the Swedish upper-class has been more powerful than the fear of Germany, and they have never ceased to rub in the recent records of the British and French governments. They have persuaded the Swedes that Britain and France were trying "to make Sweden into another Poland." In consequence the Swedish government dared not support the Finns and refused to allow their territory to be used for the passage of British and French troops. When it was known that Britain and France had actually prepared a large army to help Finland, it was even put about that the bridges on the railways which it would have to use would be destroyed to prevent their transit. In these circumstances the Finns very naturally refused to accept the help that Britain and France offered. An expeditionary force without Swedish goodwill would have been a desperate adventure and could not have saved the Finns. If Scandinavia had held together, been prepared to defend itself as a unit with British and French aid, its prospects of independence and the chance of defeating the Nazis in this war would have been good. Norway and Sweden have preferred to let Finnish

independence go; and, in so doing, have laid themselves open to Nazi domination.

It is now revealed that Moscow approached Britain as a mediator in the Finnish war on February 22nd, three weeks after the Allied War Council had decided to prepare a large expeditionary force for Scandinavia. One can understand the British Government's refusal. They feared to be accused of repeating in Finland the story of Munich. They did not wish to be responsible for urging the Finns to accept terms which destroyed their independence. They blankly refused the suggestion. Would it not have been wiser to attempt mediation by informing Stalin that we desired a compromise but thought the terms he demanded too onerous, while at the same time strengthening the bargaining power of the Finns by making clear that we had a force ready to help them in case they could not accept what Stalin offered? It was surely a mistake to refuse the role of mediator altogether. The world would have known at an earlier date that we were prepared to offer the Finns something more than a handful of volunteers and a good deal of sympathy. Britain might have got better terms for the Finns, have maintained our influence and prestige in Scandinavia and possibly re-established an invaluable contact with the U.S.S.R. The fact that Stalin actually approached Britain as mediator suggests that some of us were not wrong in thinking that he wished to avoid complete dependence on Germany and was not irrevocably committed to a joint war against the Western Powers.

What is the moral? That the Nazis, working on interior lines with a clear plan of action, can constantly win successes against Governments which have no such plan of action and whose record is not such as to inspire confidence in countries faced with life and death decisions. From the military point of view it is of the utmost importance that we eschew quixotic adventures and wasting enterprises. That is not to say that while we are militarily on the defensive we can afford to be spiritually on the defensive as well. Scandinavia for the time at least may be lost. There are other parts of the world in which the Nazis are now active and in which the democratic cause hangs in the balance. If their peoples believe that we are weak and ineffective, if there is no dynamic, no appeal to the masses, no prospect of a free and prosperous future in allied aid, the story of Scandinavia will be repeated elsewhere. A clear decision about what is strategically possible should be combined with vigorous action in our own empires and in the countries which still rely on our protection. You cannot in a world of revolutionary change be content to defend "interests" and frontiers: you must make the social conditions within those frontiers worth defending and you must convince those you offer to defend that your aid is valuable to them and not only to you. No mere military action or propaganda offensive can defend our positions in the Near East, in Africa or in India unless they are accompanied by actions which prove that the propaganda is more than slogans, the soldiers defenders of free peoples not of useful chattels. Once again we repeat, the only defence possible against the Nazis is a democratic offensive against the evils and injustices within our own frontiers as well as in theirs. We must give common people everywhere a sense that the war is their war because the countries are their countries. That is the true lesson for British policy.

WHITHER RUSSIA?

[This article written by a neutral journalist resident in Moscow, gives a personal impression of Russian policy.]

ONE impression which has grown on your correspondent during recent weeks is that those who still harbour illusions about Russia creating an eastern front against the Germans, and eventually coming into the allied fold, are in for a bitter jolt. Russia is going in for collaboration with Germany in a big way, with an eye to and beyond the end of the war. Here is a rather simplified version of what may well have happened in the Kremlin during recent years. For some ten years Stalin had unquestioned control of the Party apparatus, and over Soviet governmental policy. He concentrated all his efforts on the construction of heavy industry, transport, a mechanised and collectivised agricultural system, and other things considered necessary to make Socialism work in one country. Every effort was made to do this with as little help as possible from abroad, and buying manufactured consumers' goods from abroad was absolutely abandoned. In the course of these years the country lived through famines and terrible hardships. The country also lived through very sharp factional difficulties caused by those who disagreed with the policies of Stalin, and often were driven to conspiratorial activities in expression of their opinions.

From 1937 to 1939 the U.S.S.R. underwent a purge which did incalculable damage. Due to this purge, and also to increased military expenditures, the rising curve of standard of living of the Russian people flattened out, and probably went down slightly from 1937 till the end of 1939. Production curves also flattened out, though there was probably a continued slight absolute increase annually. Some of the most competent men in all fields of Soviet life, from the Red Army to the theatre, were arrested, sometimes shot, often to be cleared later as having been the victims of malicious slander. All the time Litvinov toyed with collective security in Geneva, while it became clearer and clearer to the men in the Kremlin that the stage was being set for a general attack on the Soviet Union.

Somewhere about 1937, perhaps earlier, perhaps later, Stalin decided that Socialism could be built independently in Russia, but that it was excessively expensive. Productivity of labour was rising so slowly that it would take generations to catch up to most advanced countries. The Soviet workers with an average monthly wage of 287* roubles, which is the price of a good pair of shoes, or a poor suit, still could not find nearly enough things to buy. The collective farmers with considerable cash incomes were even worse off. It was the old "scissors" which had caused so much trouble during the civil war.

What was to be done? Stalin decided that it was necessary to enlist the collaboration of some great industrial country. The advantages to be gained were: (1) Assurance against complete Russian isolation in case of a war. (2) The use of an industrial apparatus to convert Russian raw materials into manufactured consumers' goods for several decades until Russian industry was in a position to do it in the required quantities. (3) Supplies of machine tools, spare parts, rolling mills, chemical apparatus, optical equipment, and other products of contemporary industry which Russia will have to import for years to come.

There were three obvious candidates for the job—Great Britain, the U.S.A., and Germany. America was out for the simple reason that the United States does not import the commodities which the Soviet Union has to export. England was out because she got these commodities from her colonies at very good prices, and because in the opinion of the Kremlin, London is the arch enemy of Red Russia, and could not be trusted to carry on a policy of friendly collaboration with the Bolsheviks for any length of time. The obvious choice was Germany. True, there were certain ideological obstacles, but as Marx remarked years ago, ideologies have a tendency to

* Stalin's speech at XVIII Party Congress, March, 1939.

bend themselves before the basic facts of geography and productive forces. Germany needed everything that Russia had to offer, and could supply almost everything that Russia needed. Stalin was and is a logical realist. He began fishing for a rapprochement with Nazi Germany. His speech in March, 1939, was an open invitation. Some time about April the first actual negotiations were carried out. The presses of the two countries tapered off their withering barrages against each other. The negotiations came out into the open in August. The latest step was the pact of February 11th, 1940. The negotiations are still going on—in a spirit of mutual collaboration to the shoulder.

The advent of the war immediately after the publication of the Soviet-German pact in August was an unexpected turn of events for both Moscow and Berlin. They both utilised the situation to improve their positions in Eastern Europe, and to begin their economic collaboration on a big scale. Both are now used to the war, which at the beginning was rather incredible to both, and they are in the process of deciding what to do about it.

If our train of thought has been at all accurate up to this point, it is perfectly clear that Russia will not form an Eastern front against Germany, and cannot be reckoned as a potential ally of the democracies.

But now what are Moscow and Berlin going to decide to do about the war? Your correspondent is of the impression that the defensive variant is receiving the most serious consideration in Berlin, and in Moscow. By the defensive variant the strategists mean a continuation of the present German military activities, abstenance from any offensive action either on the Western Front, in the Balkans or Scandinavia, harrassing the Allies at sea with mines, planes and submarines, though without hopes of winning any even local maritime supremacy, and intensified development of Russia as a base of supplies for everything, or nearly everything that Germany needs to import.

Let us suppose that Hitler succeeded in satisfying himself with defensive warfare for several years, and that the Russians agreed to collaborate. German organisation would be able to squeeze a good deal of everything out of the rich Russian soil. The Soviet Union has something more than half the known petroleum deposits of the world, incalculable iron, endless forests, and the largest stretch of good agricultural land in the world. These are just the things Germany needs. If she got them from Russia, she could keep up the war almost indefinitely, the war that is costing Britain something like £10 million a day. It would put the Allies in a position where they would almost have to attack the Siegfried Line. It would be awkward.

Of course the Russians would have to be prepared to sign an alliance with Germany, and face a probable state of war with the Allies, and perhaps the U.S.A. They would have to be prepared to have the Germans run some Soviet plants, perhaps whole industries. They would have to be prepared to undergo British or Turkish submarine attacks in the Black Sea. To your correspondent it seems not impossible that they should have thought this over, and come to the conclusion that it was worth while. Germans are already numerous in Moscow. German equipment is in operation all through Soviet industry from the old days, and new equipment and spare parts are arriving now. German barges are being prepared to carry Baku petroleum through the Dniester-Bug canal to Danzig. Russian cellulose is on its way to German chemical and other plants.

And most important of all, in the opinion of many Russians, such an arrangement would ensure victory for Germany and Russia, in the form either of collapse of the British Empire, or its diplomatic capitulation, leaving Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia and at least the northern Balkans as German sphere of influence. In this case, the Russians think that they could go ahead collaborating with Germany and realising the prosperity which the efficient exploitation of their natural resources would bring.

And what of the world revolution? For some time the world revolution has definitely played second fiddle to a patriotic national socialism in the Soviet Union. They have gone ahead talking of the world wide proletarian movement, while very different and nationalistic objectives have been expressed in the policies of the Kremlin. The principal aim of the Communist movement for years has been the defence of the Soviet Union as the first fatherland of the working classes. In the summer of 1938 a Czech Communist in Prague told me that he thought the Commintern was justified in sacrificing Czechoslovakia to Germany if this seemed necessary for the defence of the Soviet Union, and moreover he was prepared to accept the Commintern decision on the point without question.

Now the Russians have definitely come to the conclusion that the world revolution is a long way off, and quite out of the question as an immediate issue. Collaboration between Germany and the U.S.S.R., however, is quite real, and offers possibilities of success. "The Germans are the only other people in the world beside us who would put up with the dictatorship of the 'proletariat,'" said a Russian party member to me not long ago.

JOHN STEVENS

Moscow.

A LONDON DIARY

"THE stage army of the good," as H. W. Nevinson used to call it, was there in force to hear Mr. Wells, Señor Madariaga, Mr. Middleton Murry and Dr. Joad at the Central Hall on Tuesday. There were also a very few who belonged to other armies, Fascists, who had to be turned out, and a Social Creditor or two, who preached a sermon to the departing multitude. H. G. Wells repeated his thesis about the fate of Homo Sapiens and expounded his proposition about the Rights of Man. Madariaga made some witty comments, Joad told some good stories and Middleton Murry made the wise remark that people who said thay wanted peace often only meant that they wanted to be left in peace. The audience applauded everything and went home, discussing, as they have discussed in the past, the League of Nations, Pacifism, Abyssinia, Spain and the rest. If the Rights of Man has a bearing on practical policy, which it certainly may have, everybody ought to have been signed up with a job to do, and been told exactly how to fight for their freedom. But they weren't. They went home to talk and not to act. The world is rapidly dividing into the ineffective good and the men of action who forget what is worth fighting for. Where are we to find effective men of action, who have not lost faith and scruple? That was the question I asked myself as we stepped out from the applause into the black-out.

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A neutral who had just crossed from Germany told a friend of mine that our leaflets were not very effective. "What would you put on them?" asked my friend. "Well, if you could say that you had given freedom to India, that would indeed have an effect in Germany," said the neutral. This will sound odd to many English people, but only to English people. Except in England, where we are forgetting India as much as possible, British domination of India stands as the symbol of our imperialism. It is constantly used by the Nazis and it is proof positive in the minds of most people on both sides of the Atlantic that we are only fighting for vested interests. I gather from a long cable that has just been received from Abdul Kalam Azad, the President-Elect of the Congress, that there is likely to be a new and damaging agitation against Britain's failure to make the democratic cause sound anything but farcical in India. We are strange propagandists. We did something really good the other day. We actually voted a considerable sum for colonial development, but did Mr. Chamberlain blazon this about in his speech a few days later? Nothing of the kind. Perhaps he thought it would annoy the Conservative Party. The only propaganda that counts is to do what is good and let the world know about it. When we

fail to do it the Nazis will tell the world. When we do do it, why keep silent?

* * *

Eight pamphlets about Finland lie on my table. There is the threepenny *Statement* (published by Simpkin Marshall) which is known as the Finnish *White Paper*. Its presentation of the Finnish case is highly tendentious. It contains such misleading remarks as that "there have never been any minority problems in this country." This publication provided legitimate sport for Mr. Pritt in his famous Penguin, which has received so much publicity that the shilling pamphlet by W. P. and Z. K. Coates on *Russia, Finland and the Baltic*, which also stated Stalin's case, has been overlooked. This pamphlet prints official documents in full, but it slips up when it quotes newspaper articles as a proof of public opinion. For instance, it quotes laudatory articles on the Soviet Treaties from the press of the Baltic States and deduce that the Baltic peoples approved of those treaties; yet the Coates well know that the press was officially controlled and was inspired to take that line so as to deny Moscow any shadow of a *casus belli*. It is unfortunate too that identical minor inaccuracies occur in their pamphlet and in D. N. Pritt's book. But this is a more worthy production than the two straight Communist propagandist publications, one by Emile Burns and the other published by the *Russia Today Society*. For those who like propaganda there is an antidote in the Labour Party's pamphlet lusciously called *Finland: the Criminal Conspiracy of Stalin and Hitler*. This writes down to its readers in a way that makes it beneath the notice of adults. It makes no attempt to answer the difficult questions that perplex the Labour rank and file everywhere. For those who do want facts and an attempt to face these problems there is the Union of Democratic Control's 4*d*. pamphlet. This is reliable and objective, but rather scrappy towards the end and inadequate on the events after October. Now (at the price of 3*s*.) there appears a Blue Book published by Messrs. Harrap for the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After an objective and dignified introduction, it gives thirty-five documents relating to the Finno-Soviet negotiations. It has been available (in Swedish) for months, no point in the account has been challenged by Moscow. One is sorry that the Coates did not consult this: it would at least have shown them that their map wildly exaggerated the generosity of the Soviets in the matter of restoring Carelian territory to Finland.

* * *

I was talking last Sunday to a friend in one of the Midland engineering shops and asked him what conditions were like. "We work two twelve-hour shifts," he replied. "Six days a week and sometimes seven." I began to express sympathy, when he interrupted me. "You people have far too simple views about long hours. Overtime does not matter so much as the sort of work you do. We are skilled men, my work is interesting and there are plenty of times during the day when I am not doing anything but keeping an eye on the machine. As a matter of fact I feel better now than I have for years. I have a safe job, the money is good and the kids are all right. It is not like working on the conveyor belt, when they can speed you up till it gets on your nerves. They cannot do that to a skilled engineer, because we know what our machines can do better than they do—and we can tell them so. A speed-up can break you in a few weeks, but I could work for the duration my twelve-hour shift." My friend's remarks explain a good deal about labour-problems. There is a deep gulf between the craftsman and the unskilled man at the belt. The skilled worker is to a great extent his own master: he cannot be treated as a machine for tending machines, nor can he be replaced by another "labour-unit." That is why his Unions are always the strongest. He can risk a strike because he can find work of his own choosing elsewhere in times of full employment like a war. But the unskilled man is simply a unit in one plant, replaceable if he causes trouble and therefore unable to resist the speed-up. He cannot be interested in his work or proud of it and so the nervous strain of long hours is far greater. Paradoxically enough it is not the wage-slave but the aristocrat of labour who takes the lead in a Shop-Stewards' movement, whether on the Clydeside or in the Midlands, just as it is the middle classes which produce so many of the political leaders of Socialism. I am told that the shop-stewards are regaining the position they held in the last war, but that at present they are non-political and solely concerned with factory problems.

* * *

In different parts of the country, from Northumberland and Tyneside, from Walworth and Walthamstow, groups of men, some of them unemployed, have for some time been active as amateur painters and sculptors. Now an exhibition of their work is being held at the Conway Hall in Torrington Square, organised by Mr. G. A. Stevens for the British Institute of Adult Education, with the aid of a grant from the Pilgrim Trust. Some of the pictures are delightful and expressive; others are mere imitations of Royal Academy works. But the value of this activity, I think, must be judged in the first place not by the pleasure given to the spectator but by the satisfaction experienced by the artist. And one painter may have enjoyed making pictures you think dull just as much as another enjoyed making pictures you think charming. A number of these works show startling freshness of vision or are very expressive of the artist's feelings about his environment. I was particularly struck by *Scene in a Police Court* (J. Hardingham, Maryport), *The Living Room* (J. McGreavey, Tyneside), *The Garden* (Harry Youngs, Northumberland), *Dawn* (James Floyd, Northumberland), *Washing* (Herbert Dees, Spennymoor), *Convalescence, from My Bed* (C. Cracknell, Walworth), *Hastings* (Thomas Snook, Walworth), *Imaginative Seascape* (Donald Brazier, Walworth). Mr. David Burton being a pavement artist can hardly be allowed amateur status, but his *Punch and Judy Show* is one of the most charming works in the Exhibition. Robert Newton's pictures are skilful in a more sophisticated style. I notice that the pictures I have picked out are not in oil paint—which is a medium specially difficult for the amateurs. The teachers as a rule wisely concern themselves, we are told, "more with the aesthetic education of the pupil than with his technical competence." It is hoped that this show may both encourage the painters to feel that their work is worth while and persuade others to follow their example. Drawing is, I believe, as natural to the majority of men and women as singing and dancing.

* * *

I am told (on the least reliable authority) that the following advertisement has recently appeared in a German newspaper:

> Parrot. Lost, etc. Will finder kindly return to such and such address. Note.—The opinions of the parrot are not those of the owner.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of the column goes this week to Ivor Levius.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1.

Britain has found a new use for its stately homes.

Young soldiers who have completed their training and are due to leave for France are taken to these monuments to a golden age of squirearchy.

They spend their last few days in the home country amid surroundings calculated to leave a rich and lingering memory of a homeland worth fighting for.

"The boys come here for a finishing course," the *Daily Mirror* was told, "but principally the idea is a psychological one.

"And like any who come into contact with this atmosphere, they unconsciously feel a stronger determination that such things must never be sacrificed. This is home. This is freedom."—*Daily Mirror*.

Some people consider that were Malcolm MacDonald at the Bar he could if he so wished reach the office of Lord Chancellor.

How many know that the Colonial Secretary can walk on his hands and sing at the same time?—*Aberdeen Evening Express*.

These are the sellers of the Peace Pledge News, described by two people at Birmingham Watch Committee meeting yesterday :—

COUNCILLOR SALE : " I saw them at every ten or twenty-five yards (when the Premier visited Birmingham last month). They had long hair. It was a nauseating sight."

THE CHIEF CONSTABLE : " They were cranks—and mostly weak-minded."—*Daily Express.*

Pacifist (26), married, seeks compatible employment, usual occupation, butchering.—Ad. in *Peace News.*

Lady Hart Dyke, who keeps 6,000,000 silkworms, will take specimen pedigree silkworms with her to America when she goes over in the summer to lecture to convicts.—*Sunday Graphic.*

THE NEW INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

II

ONE of the experts of a big metal concern 'phoned me derisively when I published an article describing a factory of 25 years hence. I had pictured a kind of " Temple of the Machine " with great presses enshrined like the metal gods of some pagan cult and a few technicians, like acolytes in their immaculately white overalls, moving up and down the aisles with the austerity of sidesmen. In a glass-encased " pulpit," an administrative engineer sat at a large dashboard, covered with gauges and instruments. It was an extrusion works, where metal tubes were squirted through a nozzle, just as sphaghetti has been for 2,000 years. The tubes were switched away at points controlled from the pulpit into " sidings " where automatically they were caught up by jigs and converted, without human intervention, into bedsteads.

" Bit out of date, aren't you ? " jibed my friend the engineer. " Tubes ? Too simple ! Why, at my place we are already extruding. . . ." What they were extruding was an industrial secret then and is an Official Secret now, but it was surprising enough to make my vision seem myopic.

" Extrusion " is one of the modern processes to which the war is likely to give an impetus. It is best described in terms of a tooth-paste tube. Various brands of tooth-paste have their various shaped " squirts." The paste comes through the nozzle in round, semi-circular, square or oblong form. Metal or plastic resins can be used in extrusion. In its simplest form we see plastic extrusion as combs or as cosmetic boxes, where the resin has been forced into a mould, with instantaneous cooling. In this way, combs, which once meant laborious hand-cutting of the teeth, can be produced about as easily as confetti.

Extrusion of metal is the same, in principle, as squirting tooth-paste or spaghetti, or, better still, macaroni. In the case of macaroni, the hollowness is obtained by forcing the flour-paste through a hole which contains a metal pin supported from within the press. Similarly, a metal tube can be produced. An ingot of metal is heated moderately and placed in the press. A plunger, driven by hydraulic pressure, fits the press, like a piston in a cylinder. It drives the softened metal through the nozzle, from which it emerges, hardening into the shape.

I have seen a range of 1,250 different shapes, formed by extrusion. They varied from simple " I " or " O " shapes to designs as complicated as the Chinese alphabet. Most of them could not have been produced by drawing or rolling or moulding, nor by handcraft methods, however laborious. An extrusion-press can make bars with curved cross-sections and bars containing longitudinal holes (running the whole length like the letters in Margate Rock). In fact it will make almost any shape of uniform cross-section, small or large.

These extrusion presses replace a large number of non-automatic or semi-automatic machines. Some of the complicated shapes would have meant moulding, riveting or welding different pieces. Now they are just spewed out. And in my factory of the future I showed how by pressing a button in the " pulpit " a different nozzle would slip into position as easily as one alters the aperture of a camera.

Another of the many automatic processes, the development of which will be speeded up by the war, is centrifugal casting. This process was first used about 1920 for making bronze castings at Sandusky, Ohio. It was later used for casting iron pipes and in recent years gun-barrels have been produced by this method. It is necessary for the guns to be made of carefully controlled steel alloy. Molten steel is poured into a horizontal rotating mould, which by the end of the cast is spinning at a speed of 1,500 revolutions per minute. The total time of manufacture is cut to a fraction of that required by established methods. In time of war, small plants employing this process, can turn out guns more rapidly than the old-type forging plants. Centrifugal casting can replace the old-time, slow, expensive and wasteful process of making gun-barrels from large steel forgings and it is claimed that the properties of the metal cast in this way are distinctly better and more uniform than those produced by forging methods.

Die-casting is another process which is likely to be extended although its pre-war applications were already extremely wide. They ranged from small bolts to bodies for vacuum cleaners. Modern die-casting machines consist of a reservoir of molten metal heated by gas or electricity. The die or mould is made of special steel arranged in several parts so that the casting can be withdrawn when they are separated. The motion of a wheel presses the parts of the die together. A lever opens the valve which releases compressed air to operate a plunger and force metal into the die. It solidifies almost instantly. Then the die is opened and the casting drops out. One die-casting machine is capable of turning out four and a quarter million carburettor bowls—enough for all the world's internal combustion engines—in a year.

Then there are broaching-machines. These are glorified files, but their uses replace the hands of careful craftsmen. For example, a broaching machine will " plane " a piece of metal to delicate requirements which would take hours of careful filing, grinding and polishing. The broach consists of a relay of carefully graded teeth, moving against the face of the metal. The first teeth take off a thin sliver of metal. The second set bite a bit deeper and so on until the last sets of teeth do the finishing. Nor is their use confined to flat surfaces. They can cut and finish any surface which is curved in one direction only—for instance, semi-circular bearings for motor cars.

Even more sensational is the possibility that, before the war is over, we may see bombers moulded out of bakelite as an Easter egg is moulded out of chocolate. One of these machines is undergoing flying-trials in the United States at the moment.

The bakelite which is the base of the process is a product from the phenols found in coal-tar—carbolic acid, in fact. It was discovered by Dr. Baekelans, about forty years ago, when he found that carbolic acid treated with formaldehyde, another coal-product, formed a plastic material which could be formed into hard and durable shapes. Most people know it best as ash-trays.

Bakelite can be used to " bind " various kinds of " fillings " —wood dust is used for the cheaper products, but asbestos, textiles and other materials can be used. In the case of the bakelite 'plane, extremely thin sections or veneers of wood are the filling. An enormous mould called " The Whale" which is self-descriptive, compresses, under heat and pressure, the bakelite and its filling into the shape of the fuselage.

But the startling fact is that this mould, employing nine men, can produce in a twenty-four-hour day ten fuselages with no need for internal bracing. And, although in the experimental stages the wings have not yet been shaped in this way, under mass-production methods they certainly would be. The time required would be the same as that for the fuselage—so that two moulds and eighteen men would produce an air frame in two hours. Consider what this means. A flying-boat needs 300,000 rivets. Exit the riveters and the drillers of the holes.

A " metal-skin " fuselage needs carpenters, metal-workers, etc. Their job vanishes. Even the painter may be dispensed with because there is no reason why, like so many plastic ornaments which are decoratively grained, the plastic plane should not emerge from the mould already camouflaged through simply mixing pigment with the bakelite. The material is about five thirty-seconds of an inch in thickness—about the same as a match-stick. It is about a sixth as light as duralumin. Thus, if necessary, it can be used in thicknesses six times that of the normal " skins " of metal 'planes.

It has been reckoned by aviation experts that the 300,000 rivets in a flying boat mean 250 more horse-power because of the air-drag on the rivet heads. The bakelite 'plane is aerodynamically smooth—the perfect streamline. During flying tests with five passengers and baggage, it had proved a cruising-speed of 200 miles an hour, which is eight per cent. faster than a 'plane with riveted fuselage and the same horse-power.

The challenge of the plastic 'plane is a daring one, fraught with labour-displacing possibilities. But is only one of the hundreds of possibilities of the new plastics. The material which can be moulded into a 'plane can be used to mass-produce furniture (it is already widely used in moulded wireless cabinets) or boats, or, as a long-shot, pre-fabricated houses.

I have seen most exquisite applications of plastics. An enterprising silk manufacturer used fine silk fabrics as the " filler." He built up layers of plastic material and, as the top layer, used the silk; he impregnated it with transparent resin and the result was to make the silk everlasting and capable of being built into a wall. Similarly, he " plasticised " gold lace so that it became a permanent table-cloth when used as a table-surface. He treated portraits in the same way.

That was the proper imaginative attitude to plastics. The tendency has been to treat them as a substitute, to make them imitate woods or metals and not to launch them as a new medium. The excuse has been that " people had to get used to them." People would have been more attracted by their novelty value, if the full range of their attractions, peculiar to themselves, had been exploited.

Milk, urea, glycerine, acetyline and many other chemical materials can be converted into plastics. Its utility ranges from the cinematograph film and the gramophone record to electric insulators and the plastic 'plane. It is supreme as the mass-production material. It does away with sawing, planing, joinering, turning, finishing and painting when it invades the field of the woodworkers. Now it is threatening in the same way the riveters, the welders, the sheet-metal workers, the tin-plate workers, the boat-builders, the fitters, and others in the aviation industry.

Plastics, as a medium of mass-production, are bound to develop rapidly under war conditions. The repercussions upon the crafts are bound to be severe. It was because the scientists could see in such synthetics, as exemplifying new scientific discoveries, the threat of maladjustments in industry that they so willingly agreed to co-operate with the Trades Union Congress in forming a scientific advisory committee. They wanted the industrial workers to be forewarned, to make, if they could, adjustments to meet the changes rather than to bear the brunt of a sudden impact. That committee, consisting of twelve of Britain's leading scientists, selected because they were qualified to deal with just this kind of major problem, has been " standing by " for over two years.

The Division of Social and International Relations, formed by the British Association, also made this problem one of its prime concerns. It appointed a Committee on Science and Industry to consider the effects of scientific advances upon old industries and on the development of new industries. One of its main anxieties was the displacement of labour and the impact upon the crafts.

Eight months ago, it held a meeting at Manchester to draw attention to the urgency of the problem. It chose Manchester as the centre of an old industry, cotton. Scientists discussed the impact of science upon that industry, not only from within through scientific changes in technique, but from without, through the development of rayon. They also dealt extensively with the development of the plastics as typifying a new scientific industry and their possible consequences. Professor Hyman Levy concerned himself at that meeting with the " Social Accountancy " of science, the profit through an expanding standard of life for the community at large and the loss through displacement of labour and the sacrifice of craftsmanship.

Science was flashing the red light. If the problem were urgent then, it is critical now. RITCHIE CALDER

HAPPY ENDING

I HAVE been sent—in common, no doubt, with thousands of other people—a letter from a matrimonial agency, not with a view to improving my own condition, but in the hope that I may be of use to my unmarried friends by telling them of the agency's existence, " With the object of further increasing the scope of the bureau," says the lady who writes to me. " I am bringing the service to the notice of professional men in the hope that my circulars may be passed on to unmarried friends or relatives, of the recipients who may be interested." " I think," the letter goes on, " most people will agree that there is an almost countless number of persons of both sexes who lack sufficient opportunities of meeting a desirable partner for matrimony, and, although some prejudice still exists against the employment of an agent in such a matter, there can be little doubt that the need for an experienced agency which can be relied upon to arrange carefully selected introductions is now fully recognised."

I confess to being one of the people in whom some prejudice still exists in this matter. I can scarcely understand the point of view of a man who wants to be married before he has met the woman he wants to be married to. I agree that it is possible to fall in love with a woman merely from hearing a description of her: Rudel did so. But Rudel fell in love with the Lady of Tripoli romantically. He was not a lonely bachelor who said to himself, " I must have a wife," and picked out the Lady of Tripoli as the most suitable of the applicants for the position. We Victorians were firm believers in romantic love. We should have preferred never to marry at all to marrying any one but the one woman with whom we were in love for the time being. It never occurred to us that a wife was a utility to be obtained through an agency, like a ticket for a concert. We did not want to marry a strange woman who was anxious to be married. We wanted to marry the unique adored one, the goddess who by a miracle had appeared in our prosaic neighbourhood and whose presence had turned it into a paradise. Goddesses, I think, were fairly common in those days. Popular fiction was full of them.

They were also fairly easy to meet. Many men met them in church. I fancy that, if there are more lonely bachelors in the world to-day than there used to be, this is largely due to the decline of the habit of churchgoing. When I was a boy, a beautiful girl could half-fill a church at the evening service. Hardened sceptics in their teens would sit through the longest sermon gazing with reverent faces at her pew. Church bazaars and sales-of-work flourished on the number of her worshippers. She could make a bald-headed old bachelor whose ruling passion was a hatred of antimacassars buy an antimacassar. She could sell a book of raffle-tickets for a cake or a bicycle in the twinkling of an eye. Naturally, there was no difficulty in finding the person whom one wanted to marry in those days. Every church was, as it were, a matrimonial agency. And if there were not enough goddesses to go round, many men luckily were content with semi-demi-goddesses, who sometimes had a little money.

It may be that, if the habit of church going continues to decline, romantic love of this kind as a prelude to marriage will become increasingly rare. There is as yet no social centre to take the place of the church, and if men and women

no longer find it so easy to meet and to be introduced, it may be that in their loneliness they will turn for help to the matrimonial agency. One can imagine a time when a man will advertise an empty heart in the newspapers as he nowadays advertises an empty house. Perhaps in the end the State will take the matter up and we shall have a public register of potential wives and husbands with descriptions of their appearance, state of health, character, income and recreations. If such a state of things ever comes about, however, I hope that the descriptions will be written, not by the candidates for marriage themselves, but by impartial judges.

I felt this strongly when I read the "application form" enclosed in the letter which the matrimonial agency addressed to me. Here the would-be bridegroom is invited to give particulars about himself in regard to some of which it is almost certain that he and the more critical of his friends would differ. He could tell the truth about his height easily enough, but, even in so simple a matter as the description of his hair, is he not likely to answer "fair" or "dark" when truth demands that he should write "thin, limp and grey" or "bald as a coot"? It is only after long years of marriage that the ordinary man admits that he is as bald as he is, and even then he is rather sensitive about it.

After questions about the hair come questions about the figure, and the applicant is given his choice of "slim," "medium" and "full." Here again many men will find it difficult to tell the truth. Who, wishing to commend himself to the imagination of an unknown woman, would describe his figure as "full"? Besides, the man with a full figure does not always think of it as full; more often he thinks of it quite honestly as medium. Having described his figure, the applicant is then asked to say whether he is "considered attractive"—a subject on which there are no bounds to the ordinary human being's capacity for self-deception. Now, as everybody knows, there is no one more unattractive than the unattractive man (or woman) who considers himself (or herself) attractive; yet to the question, "Considered attractive?" each of them is bound, if sincere, to answer "Yes." It is only a rare embittered bachelor who will reply: "No, thank God, everybody loathes me." This answer, incidentally, might appeal to the mothering instinct of a would-be bride and lead to a delightfully happy marriage. At the same time, I think marriages would have a better chance of turning out happily if both the man and the woman were compelled to produce certificates of their attractiveness from unbiased sources.

"Companionable?" is easy to answer. The normal reply would be: "So-so." "Fond of animals?" is more difficult. After all, one can like one's own cat and feel inimical to a large number of other people's cats. One can like horses and at the same time hate slugs. One can like nightingales and be terrified of one's neighbour's cockatoo. If I were asked whether I was fond of animals, I could only reply: "I like animals of which I am not afraid." In the charity which embraces the tarantula and the charging hippopotamus I am utterly lacking. To "Fond of bridge?" I have no doubt about my answer. Not only do I dislike playing bridge, except with talkative incompetents, but I hate seeing other people playing bridge. It is the only pastime that seems to me to be an entire waste of life. How many fine conversationalists have become lost to the world as bridge-players! It is all very well to waste one's life, but no one should waste his life with such religious devotion as this.

Among the other questions, by giving the right answer to which you may win a bride or a bridegroom are "Smart appearance?" "Abstainer?" "Cultured?" "Ball-room dancing?" "Kind-hearted?" and "Sense of Humour?" They all seem to me to resemble the other questions in that there are two possible answers to each of them—the answer of the applicant and the answer of people who know the applicant better than he knows himself. "Sense of humour?" for example. It is a notorious fact that people who have no sense of humour pride themselves on their sense of humour. It is only an exceptional man who will admit that he has no sense of humour, and he as a rule prides himself on the absence of it. At a guess I should say that of all the applicants who fill in their forms a little over 99 per cent. will write the word "Yes" after "Sense of humour?" As for "Abstainer?" abstinence in the minds of most men is a matter of degree. I have heard of men famous for their thirst describing themselves as abstainers when taking out a life-insurance policy. If I were a would-be wife, I should make close inquiries before accepting the word of my would-be husband that he was an abstainer.

Last of all the questions on the list is "Loyal?" An Ulsterman would find no difficulty in answering the question for he would take it that he was being asked whether he was a follower or an opponent of Lord Craigavon. But to an Englishman "loyal" might mean anything from being loyal to the Throne to being loyal to a woman he had never seen. If he badly wanted to get married, he would probably answer "Yes" and take the risk of subsequent misunderstanding.

Will the results of marriages contracted in this businesslike, question-and-answer way be less happy, I wonder, than the old-fashioned marriages to Victorian goddesses? Dr. Johnson would probably have said not. We may be on the eve of a new form of romance, indeed, when men and women will marry, not because they are victims of the illusion of love, but because they are fond of bridge or are abstainers or are of smart appearance. I have myself a leaning towards Victorian notions, but at the same time I believe that, if two people are bent upon making each other happy, they will be happy, even if both of them are abstainers or both of them are fond of bridge.

Y. Y.

Miscellany

COUNTRY NOTES

"Wear Willow in thy hat"

WHY was the willow ever adopted as a symbol of grief? I cannot tell, because I do not know. I can suggest only that the variety whose habit has caused it to be named the Weeping Willow (*Salix Babylonica*) may be responsible for this dismal attribution, mentioned specifically in Psalm 137 verse 2:

> By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down . . .
> We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

Now no one, without the help of string or a miracle, could possibly dangle a harp on the very flexible pendulous twigs of *Salix Babylonica*. The harp would instantly have slid off. The logical conclusion is that the tree upon which the author of the Psalms hung his harp must have been a very different tree from the one we now know as the Babylonian Willow.

These quasi-historical remarks do not in the least destroy the pleasure one takes in the willows one grows ignorantly and confidently in one's own garden. Confidently, because they grow with such ease, grace, and rapidity. Still, grief, baskets, and cricket bats do seem an odd combination.

Willows were very much in my mind just before I started to write these notes. I knew the time had come when I ought to prune them. One cuts and cuts, slicing the stems slantwise just below the bud, and then to compensate oneself for the apparent damage done to the sunrise-coloured plantation, carries off a bundle of prunings to any stray piece of ground and sticks them in to a depth of twelve or eighteen inches, confident that 50 to 75 per cent. will take root and provide sturdy little willows for planting out next year.

Coincidences do occur in life, and so it happened that when darkness descended on me just as I had finished sticking in my willow-prunings and could scarcely see what I was doing any more, I came indoors and opened a book on the very chapter which concerned the job I had been at.* Here was a man, I found, who had experimented with willows and knew more than I could ever hope to know. A fine, fastidious

* *The Skeptical Gardener*. By Humphrey John. Harrap. 11s.

gardener he appeared to be, noticing nice shades of difference between *Salix vitellina* and *Salix alba*; esteeming *Salix daphnoides* which has the bloom of a grape all up the stem; observant enough to note that the more brilliant colour of red or yellow-barked willows occurs on the south side of the young growth. His whole book pleased me vastly, the chapter on willows most of all. It made me wish that someone would write a monograph on willows, a most attractive subject which I offer gratis to any curious and leisurely researcher, perhaps Mr. Humphrey John himself. But if anyone feels inclined to undertake this job, I do implore him to travel first to Media, now called Iran, and make his way to a stream which runs beneath the ruins of Rhages where Tobias went with his archangel and his dog, and there to sniff the scented willow which grows along that stream. I took cuttings of it myself on several occasions, but they always failed to strike, and others withered before I could get them home. I believe that there is a so-called scented willow to be obtained from nurserymen, in fact I have a vague recollection of being shown it in someone's garden, but surely it cannot spread such warm sweetness as in that tawny valley under the Median sun.

White Currant

Last week I went to a country wedding, and was surprised to find the church filled with sheaves of white flowering currant. It had been picked on so lavish a scale that the effect was of great bushes growing in every window and along the altar-rails, a snowy loveliness which the conventional white lilies could never have equalled. Naturally, I took it for the white form of the common American ribes, and yet surely that white form lacked the purity of this? It was creamier; it even had a pinkish tinge, robbing it of this dead-white ghostly quality. Subsequent inquiries brought me an unexpected piece of information. It appears that if you cut branches of the common red variety while still in bud and bring it indoors, it will flower white. This may be a well-known fact, but it struck me as very curious and left me wondering whether it would apply to any other form of flowering shrub. It would be an experiment worth trying. V. SACKVILLE-WEST

THE PEACE MONGERS

We should let the Western Powers know that Sweden and Norway cannot tolerate their interference. We do not want Finno-Scandia turned into a theatre of war . . . nor have we such faith in their present military possibilities as not to be deterred by the fate of Poland."—*Svenska Dagbladet*, March 12th (*Times*, March 13th.)

THE undefeated flag comes down
Despite the pledge of help Allied,
The nation's doom, who fought alone,
Her neighbours, foes and friends decide.
Free Finland ceases to exist
Because the Swedes are pacifist.

What though she fought the fight of all
And bled for every threatened State?
What though foreshadowed in her fall
They see their own oncoming fate?
Aid in her ordeal they deny—
The Poles were bit, the Swedes are shy.

As France and Britain did in Spain
Their own precarious peace to buy,
So now the Oslo Powers maintain
Their spurious neutrality
To bar the intervening host
Led by the League of Nation's ghost.

They in their generation wise,
With purpose set and vision clear,
Accept all shifts, all compromise,
For help is far and terror near;
And none the other will befriend
But choose peace to the bitter end.

SAGITTARIUS

A MORALITY PLAY WITH NO MORALS

"The Star Turns Red," at the Unity

Sean O'Casey's *The Star Turns Red* is an extremely ambitious play for the Unity Theatre to stage at such a moment, requiring an enormous cast and elaborate settings. Considering the disadvantages they must be working under, they have achieved a considerable measure of success. There are memorable moments in *The Star Turns Red*: the maimed and sick of the Christian poor reviling the New World of Communism represented by the corpse of a dead comrade, in the Third Act; the typical O'Casey slapstick at the end, of two men on ladders arranging decorations in the Lord Mayor's house. There are well acted parts, if there are also some very badly acted ones; the best are the Old Man and Old Woman, the Lord Mayor, and, especially, the Lady Mayoress. Yet, on the whole, one goes away feeling that the best features of the evening are the excellent settings by Laurence Gowing; the next best the grouping of crowds in the production, by John Allen. Compared with the setting and stage management, the acting is on a disappointingly amateurish level. But most disappointing of all is the play itself, which, though it has some of the qualities of O'Casey's earlier work, confirms my feeling on reading it that, with all its literary merits, it is poor stuff. (It is published by Macmillan, at 7*s.* 6*d.*)

The Star Turns Red is a play with characters who exist only as symbols to expound a morality. Three views of life are represented by three sets of human symbols—the Catholic, the Fascist and the Communist. Mr. O'Casey—who seems to have but a faltering hold on the implications of social ideas—sympathises most with the Communist and understands best the Catholic. More than any other of his plays, this one is saturated with Catholic ideas and Catholic imagery. It is the Star of Bethlehem that turns an embarrassed pink in the last act of Revolutionary triumph produced perhaps by a wave of the wand from the Unity Theatre's famous Fairy Wish-fulfilment. Mr. O'Casey's simple view of the Revolution is that the shepherds become the kings and the kings the shepherds, whilst the good Brown Priest who truly loves the workers goes over to the proletariat. The most exalted imagery and language in this play is all taken from the Church. Compared with this the symbolism of the clenched fist and the even more firmly clenched jaw which the Communist actors manage marvellously to sustain for two and a half hours (substituting a gymnastic feat for the usual play of countenance which bourgeois actors indulge in), seems curiously ineffective. Communists are engaged in a naked struggle for power of one class over another, out of a sense of historical necessity and for no religious or non-materialist reason. Mr. O'Casey is not a Communist at all really, but a Christian Socialist who hates the Church because it has not given the poor the equality which Christ and the Brown Priest of his play represent for him. A play which worked out in a particular situation the view of Historic Materialism might have a granite hardness which would be admirable. But Mr. O'Casey's credulous confidence in the infallibility of his Red Jims and Jacks seems surrounded with pitfalls. In the Second Act a drunken but loyal worker beats up some corrupt Trades Union Leaders—to the delight of the Unity Theatre audience. But, if it had been the Saffron Shirts doing the same thing, they would have been filled with United Front Moral Indignation. These Trades Union Leaders are painted very black: but Mr. O'Casey doesn't seem to have asked himself what guarantee he offers that, given power and money, Red Jim won't become just as corrupt.

With such a tattered morality, one falls back on the psychology of Mr. O'Casey's Communists. But here he lets us down again. Every psychological peculiarity is irrelevant to the purposes of Communism. This provides one with some difficulties if one is trying to depict on the stage good Communists, who are also supposed to be human beings. Mr. O'Casey does what all Party Writers do here, he plays safe by making his Communists as wholesome as wholemeal bread. They are at once pleasure-loving and puritannical: one of them gives up booze, and another a dance (mind you, they're quite prepared to enjoy themselves), for the Cause. It is implied that the young Communist hero and heroine are the only people in the play (which represents the whole of Dublin) who enjoy a really satisfactory sexual relationship. Thus Communism is Life and everything else is a perversion of life leading towards death. Nevertheless, his portraits of Communists are unconvincing in the manner of those paintings of young people in the Art galleries of Moscow and Berlin, marching towards a goal. Their faces are flushed and healthy, but the

spectator is left with an uneasy question on his lips: "Well, what are you going to do when you've got there?" The answer is of course "Build," to be followed by pictures and plays about people building.

Sean O'Casey has a great gift of language and this play, even if it is a failure, must be of interest to everyone who cares for the serious drama. It is always well written, and the handling of large numbers of characters is skilful. Yet it suffers from the disadvantage that all the characters are "types" in the sense that they are labelled and numbered and fit into the Communist scheme of morality which—whatever one may think of it—grades people only according to their usefulness to a cause. The Saffron Shirt leader represents a symbol b of badness, let us say: therefore the Christian Front priest is b^2 because he combines the evils of reaction with the opium of religion. If a represents Communist virtue, then the poor priest who sympathises with the Workers, but believes in God equals $b + a$, which is a symbol of purely sentimental value. The Trade Union Leader equals a — —, or even worse. So one goes through the play knowing the values of all the characters, and also knowing that the Communists are bound to come out shining. The play is a virtuous exercise but it succeeds best where Sean O'Casey shows obvious failure to be a good Party Member.

STEPHEN SPENDER

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"The Beggar's Opera," at the Haymarket

It would have been easy for this production to miss all manner of boats: it has not done so, thanks to the adroitness of Mr. John Gielgud who, working in conjunction with the ever-admirable Motley, has successfully resisted the traditional view of the Playfair production as a classic. Charming as that production was, its fault—a grave one—was that it prettified away the sinister and squalid implications which makes this work unique in its kind. Those implications were made the most of, to the detriment of the rest, in the German paraphrase of Brecht and Weill; Mr. Gielgud, by shifting the action a hundred years forward and thereby giving Mr. Michael Redgrave the advantage of the Byronic hero-villain's paraphernalia, has made the best of two worlds. This emerges chiefly in the Second Act, where the tavern scene makes a most original impression, both gay and macabre; the First Act seems, by comparison with what comes later, rather to have "come out in the wash." The delicious music, in Frederick Austin's tactful score, is well served by the principals: Mr. Redgrave looks beautiful and sings as well as any musical comedy star—which is well enough; Miss Mildmay is adequate as Polly, and Miss Linda Gray, as Lucy, is the image of an 1830 aquatint. The characteristic Glyndebourne quality survives the absence of Messrs. Busch and Ebert only in the extremely fine concerted singing. The production, however, makes a far more enjoyable and distinguished entertainment than most of the critics have suggested.

"Troilus and Cressida," at the Cambridge Arts Theatre

This is much the most difficult, as it is intellectually the most stimulating, of Shakespeare's plays. One wonders how the author could have expected it to succeed, and we know from the anonymous preface to the Quarto of 1609 that it was in fact a flop, "never clapper-claw'd with the palmes of the vulger," and never "sullied with the smoaky breath of the multitude." Even in the highly civilised and abnormally crowded University town the audiences last week were discreditably spare. Yet we have never seen a better performance by the Cambridge amateurs than this. Somehow the producer induced his cast to comprehend and make comprehensible the tortuous and heavily laden language. In every sentence, even from the least important actors, the emphasis fell upon the right word—a feat unparalleled in our experience of Shakespeare on the professional stage, and in this particular play a prodigy. The leading parts were beautifully sustained: Cressida an engaging snare, all seeming innocence and profound shallowness; Pandarus ecclesiastical in his unction, washing his hands with vicarious sensuality; Troilus touchingly solemn in the fire of a boy's first love. As a *cognoscente* remarked after the performance: "Shakespeare loved Troilus the best of all his heroes," and the actor collaborated with the producer to effect this impression. Ulysses had a voice that suggested strength to bend the bow, but not guile. The intelligence with which he spoke was, even in this production, remarkable. Diomed was irresistible in his insolence, Thersites was theatrically effective, Ajax comically taurine, Patroclus a full-flowering specimen of heartsease. Agamemnon, Hector and Achilles were all bravely handsome, and Aeneas was amiably pert—one would have liked to see him carrying his father on his back. The producer's hand, active throughout, was particularly noticeable in such details as the Helen scene, where the fading Queen was eating sweets, and in the horror of the gangster murder of Hector. The sets artfully suggested the mediaeval conception of the Trojan War—the camp-scene being specially pretty—and the costumes were very happy in the Elizabethan-Classical style.

"The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus," at the Rudolf Steiner Hall.

On the second night of this excellent performance of the greatest play running in London, the theatre was almost empty. Playgoers are advised not to be deterred by the perils of going as far as Baker Street in the Blackout from seeing *Doctor Faustus*. It is astonishing how well it acts, and how overwhelming is the effect of the sustained tragedy of damnation, after the first opening in Faustus's study. Faustus is the greatest of morality plays which rises far out of its convention because of the massive characterisation of the hero, and of Mephistopheles. This whole production is extremely interesting. Mr. Peter Coke is weak in his opening monologue, which is not just the speech of a dilettante who turns to magic because he has "read all the books." After this, his performance gains in strength until the end, which is surely one of the greatest death-scenes that even the Elizabethan theatre can provide. Undoubtedly the most memorable performance of the evening was Marne Maitland as Mephistopheles. This actor made the part seem consistent as steel, and yet was never monotonous. If this play receives no support, London does not deserve a serious theatre.

"Henry IV," at the Torch Theatre

Any play of Pirandello's is worth a visit, and though *Henry IV* does not, perhaps, show him at his best, it should please those who enjoy a type of humour more cultivated than that usually offered us in wartime. The theme—a man who lives in the past and imagines himself to be a mad mediaeval Emperor—gives scope for a great deal of fantastic metaphysico-logical backchat and gentle satire on modern society of rather a refreshing kind. This is not the first London production of the play, and one would like to have seen Mr. Ernest Milton again in the part of the madman. Mr. Denis Arundell, however, is a worthy incumbent; and both he and Miss Dorothy Green deserve high marks for speaking their lines with a polish and articulation to-day usually noticeable by their absence. The production by Mr. Robert Harris was excellent, and skilfully overcome the difficulty of dealing with so small a stage. It is the misfortune of plays consisting largely of talk about ideas that they cannot be reviewed in less than an essay. One can say, however, that *Henry IV* is an unusual and entertaining specimen of the highbrow conversation-piece.

"Hell's Cargo," at the Regal
"Sons of the Sea," at the Cinephone

Hell's Cargo is the English version of a French film *Alerte en Méditerranée*. The original story—three naval officers of different nationality united to defeat international villainy—has been more or less preserved, except that for the German officer a Russian has been substituted. In the light of subsequent events this was a poor choice, and must have caused some embarrassment to the producers had they not long-sightedly presented the officer as somewhat ashamed of his origin. Robert Newton in this part gives a very subtle performance hinting most delicately at how much the Russian would prefer to be a *real* officer and a gentleman. Kim Peacock and Walter Rilla display English and French characteristics respectively, and Penelope Dudley Ward fits neatly into the role of the English officer's wife. There is an exciting and distressing scene in which the three officers navigate a destroyer through a belt of poison gas, and despite the fact that international villainy appears quite puerile a general atmosphere of suspense has been created. The French film was distinguished by its advocacy of Internationalism at a time of acute international tension, but somehow this basic idea seems to have gone astray in the English version.

Sons of the Sea almost qualifies as the *Young England* of the screen, without, unfortunately, having quite the required degree of unconscious humour in the dialogue to support the crudities of the plot. Anything more inconsequential and absurd than this

story of murder at the Royal Naval College would be hard to imagine. On the day that Captain Hyde (Leslie Banks) takes over at the Royal Naval College his predecessor is murdered. Captain Hyde is an expert on mines and apparently it was *his* death that was intended. Thoroughly neglectful of his duties as Captain of Dartmouth, he sets out to find the whereabouts of the secret minefield. His son (Simon Lach), a cadet at the College, betrays the mission to Newton Hulls (Mackenzie Ward) whose co-respondent shoes should have spelled caution to the guileless youth. Captain Hyde's launch is bombed by a plane of unknown origin, young Hyde is disgraced, and some espionage and counter-espionage take place, hilariously reminiscent of Beatrice Lillie's revue-sketch. The denouement: Newton Hulls transpires to be Captain Müller of the German Intelligence department, young Hyde's honour is vindicated, and a silly old Professor who is the highest red herring that ever crossed any trail is proved quite harmless though amorously indiscreet. The Royal Naval College provides some pictures of cadets marching and drilling, but very little else. The film is photographed throughout in Dufaycolor, and shows the disadvantages of the crudest Technicolor, at the same time giving the impression that the world is enveloped in blue gauze.

THE COMING WEEK

FRIDAY, March 15th—
- Birkbeck College Arts Society presents Three One-Act Plays: "The Happy Journey," "Le Dejeuner Marocain" and "The Spanish Tragedy," College Theatre, 7. And on March 16th.
- Recital by Richard Tauber, Queens Hall, 7.45.
- National Council for Civil Liberties Dance, Westminster Palace Rooms, 8.

SATURDAY, March 16th—
- Assoc. of University Labour Parties Annual Conference. Speakers include Prof. G. Thomson and Kingsley Martin, University Labour Club, 15 Percy Street, 11 and 2.30.
- Fabian Week-end Conference on "The Labour Party in Wartime," Kenilworth Hotel, 2.15. And March 17th.
- West London Youth Conference, Bishop Creighton House, Fulham Palace Road, 3. And March 17th at 2.
- China Campaign Committee Annual Meeting, Chief Speaker, The Chinese Ambassador, Livingstone Hall, 3.

SUNDAY, March 17th—
- Conway Memorial Lecture, Rt. Hon. Lord Snell: "Britain, America and World Leadership," Conway Hall, 11. Concert, 3.

MONDAY, March 18th—
- Poetry Recital in aid of British Red Cross, Central Hall, 1.15.
- Concert for Connoisseurs in aid of Queen Charlotte's Hospital, Boyd-Neel and his Orchestra, with Sophie Wyss, Aeolian Hall, 6.
- J. Coatman: "Mandates and Colonies," Morley College, 6.30.
- Dr. P. Subotic: "Yugoslavia and Peace in the Balkans," 12 Gt. Newport Street, 7.45.

TUESDAY, March 19th—
- Housing Centre Discussion: "Evacuation—What Is Your Solution?" 13 Suffolk Street, S.W.1, 1.
- Maurice Rowntree: "The Task Before Us," Friends House, 1.20.

WEDNESDAY, March 20th—
- Federal Union Lunch Club, Speaker: Ritchie Calder, "The United States of Europe," "The Falstaff," 1.
- B. Braatoy: Scandinavia's Reaction to Russian and German Politics," National Portrait Gallery, 5.30.
- Sir John Maynard: "A Contribution to Peace Plans," Milestone Hotel, Kensington High Street, 8.

THURSDAY, March 21st—
- Le Play Society's Tours and Field Courses commence. Particulars from 1 Gordon Square, W.C.1.

Correspondence

THE COMMUNIST'S DILEMMA

SIR,—The passions aroused by the present phase of the Communist controversy are justified by its importance. But to one who has recently left the Communist Party, more in sorrow than in anger, the most urgent of the many issues at stake appears to have been surprisingly neglected. Bitter disillusionment has been the commonest reaction to the invasion of Finland among non-communist sympathisers with the Soviet Union. It is a dangerous reaction for two reasons. The first, to which adequate attention has already been paid, is that the great social achievements of the Soviet Union may be entirely forgotten. The second and, I believe, even greater danger is the almost universal failure to understand the position of the individual party-member, or to distinguish him from his organisation.

The period between 1934 (the year of the Comintern's Seventh Congress) and 1939, was one of very considerable recruitment to the Communist Party. These years covered the whole rise and fall of the Popular Front policy. During them the Communists proved by far the most competent and devoted workers in causes which were common to all democrats and Socialists. This would, I think, be generally admitted by those who had anything to do with relief work for Spain and China. To-day there is a tendency to believe that the whole of this activity was a gigantic piece of cynicism. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Individual Communists associated their lives increasingly with the party because they found that the party increasingly represented all their aspirations and beliefs. The danger of this almost mystical association of the individual with the organisation is now deplorably obvious. Its condemnation may be read every day in the *Daily Worker's* ludicrous clap-trap about the Finnish War.

The truth is that the Communists of to-day are in much the same position as the Christians of the late nineteenth century. When the new discoveries of science exploded many inessentials of the Christian religion, its more courageous members discarded those inessentials while retaining the fundamentals of their faith. The few dogged literalists remained, but they were doomed to ridicule and a complete loss of influence.

The urgency of the present Communist position lies in this: that blind faith has been exploded by events. How many Communists will have the courage to leave their party before they acquire such a stake in its contortions that secession becomes impossible?

It is difficult for anyone who has never been a member of the Communist Party to understand how much courage is needed to leave it. The ordinary party-member will find himself in an appalling vacuum, with no alternative offered him. At the moment there *is* no alternative organisation to the Communist Party. Again to leave the party now will have all the appearance of leaving a sinking ship. The renegade Communist will not only lose the majority of his friends but will be despised by them. (For various reasons my own secession from the party involved no such martyrdom. It applies, however, to the great majority of the Communists I know.)

The duty of all Communists and Socialists who are not Stalinists seems to be clear. Individual members must be recruited out of the party, whether there is at the moment an alternative for them or not. They are far too valuable to be neglected.

28 Hyde Park Gardens, W.2. PHILIP TOYNBEE

LES FLEURS FEDERALES

SIR,—Sagittarius has loosed many an arrow that has found its mark. In his recent volley, "Les Fleurs Fédérales," I would suggest he has overshot his target:

> "They conjured up their world design
> Remote from conflicts of the day."

is entertaining satire but scarcely fair criticism of a movement whose battle-cry is "Federate or Perish." Federal Union is ploughing a stiff furrow. Of all the slings and arrows launched at it, those which suggest its irrelevancy to the present war are the least rational. "The gospel of the word of Streit" may have started the movement; it is *not* the mainspring of the movement's lightning growth in England to-day. Those who mean business in F.U. are not paddling "in the moonshine sea"—they are trying to hammer out a possible peace plan for the world when this war has run its grim inevitable course.

To be left without a considered plan at the war's end, to drift, rudderless, as in 1918, paying lip-service to the conception of a League of Nations, but without faith in its implications, seems to those who remember that poignant drama, "Versailles," the final defeat of living.

Of course, the theory of F.U. is controversial ground, *of course* it is idealistic, but equally of course it is realistic, and is urged by those of us who feel some *modus vivendi* must be found *now*, if democratic life is to continue.

Meanwhile I, for one, salute Sagittarius's satire—it is an astringent we, as a movement, need. If we cannot hack out a reasonable scheme we stand condemned—but let all who throw stones at F.U. take to heart Sir Richard Acland's admirable book, *Unser Kampf*, in which he says: "Reject the words of those who will tell you that you are 'diverting the nation from its war effort.'" Acland is not at present, I understand, a Federal Union supporter. But he has "the flame in the belly," and there are thousands of men and women like him who, if they are honest in

intention will have to work together for an international popular front. Federal Unionists are trying to make an active movement out of this passionate sense of necessity felt by so many of us.

Meanwhile—to quote a competitor's epitaph on our Archer, I will not wish him "One arrow sharper than his own," but more power to his bow if he draw it in defence of a progressive world peace movement. PHYLLIS VALLANCE

12 Cheyne Walk,
Chelsea, S.W.3.

CHURCH AND STATE

SIR,—I am surprised to find myself credited in Mr. Wilson's letter with a proposal to get rid of the State. I have never ventured to aspire so high. My proposal is more modest; I would only seek to vest some of the State's functions in a common government.

As to the relation between Socialism and Federalism, I am still a good enough Socialist to hope that a Federal Union would be a Socialist Federal Union, but I find it difficult to believe, with the examples of the U.S.A. and Switzerland to prove the contrary, that Federalism is necessarily dependent upon the prior establishment of Socialism.

I also find it difficult to acquit Mr. Wilson of the elementary error of supposing that to describe is also to share the tenets of the Huxley-Heard creed. I confined myself to expressing the view that this new movement was important, and was likely to become more so, but I expressed no opinion as to whether it was desirable that it should become more so. Mr. Wilson affirms that it is fatalistic. Not a bit of it! Heard, for example, makes great play with the notion that we must consciously *will* the mutation upon which the mystical enlightenment of consciousness depends. Also that it is escapist; possibly, possibly not. But if it is, what of it? Surely whether to "escape" is a good thing or a bad depends upon what is being escaped from. It is hard to believe that the present condition of civilisation is so admirable that the desire to escape from it should be condemned out of hand.

Hampstead. C. E. M. JOAD

NAZI-SOVIET PERSECUTION

SIR,—Mr. Durbin says that the evidence for police torture in the U.S.S.R. is no different in character from the evidence in the case of Germany: that it comes from *émigrés* and journalists. But the point is that it is very much more slender. A year or two ago I had occasion to go as carefully as I could into the published evidence on this question; and I came to the considered conclusion that in the scale of credibility of atrocity stories this one must be placed very low down. (Let us remember that if the charge has any political importance it must refer to official and systematic use of torture, not to the acts of one or two individual sadists who may be found in any of the police systems of the world.) In view of the strength of the interests likely to seize only too readily on any chance of spreading stories of this kind, it is, indeed, surprising that supported allegations of this type are so few.

The allegations in the Appendix (pp. 339–42) of Mr. Durbin's book rely entirely (as Professor Laski has pointed out) on Mr. Lyons and on a "nameless" writer in the *Sunday Express*. The two citations from Mr. Lyons are (1) that he "had the impression" that confessions were extracted by torture; (2) the stories told by Mr. Lyons about the treatment of the "Valuta suspects" in 1931, most of which were generally prefaced by some such phrase as "I was told." Anyone at all acquainted with the gossip-atmosphere in that very circumscribed foreign circle in Moscow will not find such statements very impressive as chief evidence for the prosecution. Excluding the Melgunovs and Essad Beys and writers of their calibre, the only other witness of which I know is Tchernavin, and his (if I remember right) is not first-hand evidence.

Actually, there is a good deal of negative evidence to which I think some weight can justly be attached. I will quote three instances. It is, surely, of considerable significance that when at Trotsky's "counter-trial" in Mexico a reason was offered for the confession of an engineer (in 1931), solitary confinement "without anything to read, without visit from my family," was the worst that was alleged; and that Trotsky himself did not claim that confessions were extracted by torture, but referred to them as confessions of "docile capitulators" (Verbatim Report, pp. 236 and 483). The witness of Julia de Beausobre may not be very reliable positively; but, if there had been any hint of torture, it is hardly likely to have escaped the acute sensibility—one might almost say highly coloured imagination—which that document of an aristocrat displays. Yet, not only does she afford no such evidence, but speaks of receiving "more kindness than cruelty" from her gaolers (*The Woman Who Could Not Die*, 21–2). Engineer Kleist, in the story told in your own columns two years ago (March 5th, 1938) stated categorically: "I gathered from the others (his fellow-prisoners) that the form of their examination (at G.P.U. headquarters) was almost identical with mine. There was never any suggestion of mental 'third degree,' and certainly no physical coercion." And he goes on to make it clear that this could not have been due merely to the fact that the prisoners he met were held on unimportant charges: some of them were "faced with capital charges," and at least one was a Trotskyist. M. H. DOBB

Cambridge.

THE KEYNES PLAN

SIR,—Mr. Keynes the economist may be all very well, but Mr. Keynes the psychologist is an abysmal failure.

In his *How to Pay for the War* and all that, he fails completely either to understand or to take into account the thoughts and feelings of the lower middle-class housewife. I write as a member of the class which would be greatly affected by Mr. Keynes's proposals, and to whom his book appears to be largely addressed, i.e., the class whose incomes average £300 to £350 per annum. Now to me—the "purse-bearer" and housewife—£1 in the hand is £2 deferred in a future so uncertain as that which confronts us all, and, faced with the two evils *either* of having the money and doing without the goods, *or* of seeing the goods in the shops and being unable to buy them (because of my fallen income), I would *certainly* choose the former and say "You keep the goods, I'll keep the cash."

Mr. Keynes, in his preface, suggests that to create a shortage of supplies would be "a singularly *unfair*, inefficient and irritating method of restricting consumption." But why "unfair?" I would much prefer it. We are all prepared to say: "We cannot have it because it isn't there," but we none of us like having to say: "We cannot have it because we cannot afford it." Between these lies a world of psychological difference which Mr. Keynes has not taken into account.

And there is another "difference" which Mr. Keynes seems to ignore—the difference between just being able to manage on a small income, and, a large part of it being forcibly withdrawn, being unable to manage. And what consolation is it to be told that the money we need for rent and rates *to-day* is being "deferred" so that it can be spent in riotous living in a nebulous future? Much better face "*No* jam to-day," than hope for "*Some* jam to-morrow." "WHITE QUEEN"

"THE ICE BOX"

SIR,—Mr. Kraut is surely wrong about gramophones and gramophone records. It is more than likely that the sound-tape gramophone failed (*a*) because its quality of reproduction was inferior to that of the standard gramophone, (*b*) because it was backed by no considerable or outstanding repertoire of music, and (*c*) because it was relatively expensive. Owners of gramophones would not scrap their machines and their record collections unless thay were assured of some very real improvement in reproduction; persons beginning their interest in recorded music (the rest of the potential market) are limited in number at any given time. And the machine was unfortunately named; there was no suggestion of musical instrument about it.

As for his citation of the cheap Decca records, the series was chiefly concerned with standard classics (Beethoven 5 *et hoc genus*) already in the record lists, and the quality of reproduction and interpretation was admittedly inferior to the other versions. If they are selling in greater numbers at the present higher prices, it is almost certain that so are the other and better sets. The boom in gramophone records is of comparatively recent development, and no one that I know is affected by the "snob appeal of price."

It is hard to believe that the long-playing record is not in the gramophone companies' ice-box. In 1923 Pemberton-Billing introduced a device which controlled turntable speed so that the effective length of sound-track was almost trebled. Its failure was probably due to the fact that it needed special records (the snag that killed the phonograph and the Pathe instrument), and in any event the gramophone in 1923 was hardly a musical instrument and the repertoire of standard music was relatively unimpressive.

Why have E.M.I. never developed the device? I do not remember that it was demonstrably impracticable seventeen years ago. If we accept the absurd convention of turning records over every five minutes it is not because we like it or because the possession of three or more six-shilling red-labels gives us any snob-pleasure. On the contrary. We accept it because apparently we have to and because the inconvenience is outweighed by other considerations. But I imagine most of us would as readily pay 18s. for a single-sided symphony as for six separate sides.

I suppose that this is an economic price? The set-up of the gramophone industry makes it difficult to determine whether it is, or whether we are subsidising the manufacture of refrigerators, electric irons and other oddments by an over-capitalised and expensively organised combine.

Kirk Ella Rise, FRANK THOMPSON
Kirk Ella, East Yorks.

SIR,—May I try to clarify some points raised in connection with systems of sound recording?

The Blattnerphone system involves the use of a steel wire or tape, which in recording becomes magnetised in varying intensity, and these magnetic variations are used to reproduce the original sound frequencies. I am under the impression that this apparatus as used by the B.B.C. is neither compact nor as faithful in reproduction as the disc. Nor is the magnetic impression upon the wire as permanent as the mechanical impression upon the disc. There may have been recent developments of which I am unaware, but the Blattnerphone as used by the B.B.C. is essentially a machine for prompt reproduction of long items where the highest quality is not necessary.

The best modern disc recordings and reproducers, on the other hand, leave little to be desired in any respect, although long playing obtained by a slow speed may result in restricted reproduction of the higher musical overtones. This would not trouble most record-users, but they would be timid at the prospect of having their reproducers altered to suit the slower record speed. Existing record-change devices would add to the difficulties, as the slow speed records are played from the centre outwards. Other methods of achieving long playing on discs promise even less commercial practicability.

It is true that records "as compact as cotton reels" are practicable by photographic impression on celluloid or paper. They might be more permanent and less fragile than discs, and a more uniform quality of reproduction should be obtainable. (They "improve" upon the Blattnerphone system only by means of working upon a different principle.)

But the public would think more than twice before buying a sixpenny "Penguin" book if expensive new spectacles were necessary before it could be read! Similarly, while existing records and reproducers give good entertainment, the general public are not likely to buy expensive new apparatus in order to obtain sixpenny "omnibus" records. A. M. SIBUN

45 Dowanhill Road,
Catford, S.E.6.

THE SMALL SHAREHOLDER

SIR,—Miss (or Mrs.) Rackham feels that the State is inefficient. Can she claim any more efficiency on the part of herself or her father if she has had no return for some years on the greater part of her capital, which presumably is represented by railway ordinary stock?

Business prudence would have demanded some spreading of the risk. J. B. WHIPP

FLAX

SIR,—There is an interesting reference to flax-growing in Miss Sackville-West's "Country Notes." A revival of flax-growing is in full swing in this country, now that imports from Russia have ceased and Dutch and Belgian supplies have been diverted. Parts of Wessex have an old tradition of flax-growing and there are spinners at Bridport and weavers at Crewkerne and Castle-Cary for whom home-grown supplies will in future be available. In the West Country flax is an ideal smallholders' crop. It is impervious to wireworm, rabbits and birds; it requires neither the binder nor the threshing machine. And now it offers the grower a guaranteed price for the crop in addition to the Government £2 an acre subsidy for ploughed-up grass. It is therefore a better crop than wheat for the smallholder. But on hilly land it must be hand-pulled, and at all times the ground must be free from weeds. It should therefore be grown in small lots.

In other parts of England, notably East Anglia and the Midlands, flax is being grown on an extensive industrial scale. But in those regions wide, level fields, an arable-farming tradition and a drier climate justify bigger acreages; and on such farms the newly improved "pulling machines" will work.

For the time being flax cannot be grown for linseed since the pedigree seed is too precious and must be saved for expansion in 1941. This year 16,000 acres are being grown by contract with the farmers under Government supervision. This is only a small proportion of the 320,000 acres which were produced in the British Isles in 1860. Linseed can be grown with an inferior variety of flax-seed.

Lest Miss Sackville-West's readers take her literally and expect to see fields of blue when the flax is in flower, let me add that probably they will feel disappointed, since the flowers are usually immersed in the waving green sea of flax stems. But the crop is pretty none the less. A stranger crop, also grown in these parts, is hemp, which reaches a height of ten or more feet and has to be cut with a knife. It is even more exacting than flax, but its uses are varied and valuable. ROLF GARDINER

Fontmell Industries,
Netherbury, Beaminster.

PROPAGANDA IN THIS WAR

SIR,—I recently began to take *The Daily Herald* again after a lapse of a considerable period, and was extremely depressed to find an erstwhile Socialist paper playing, as you said, second fiddle to *The Daily Express*. I also find myself reflecting that the mood and opinions of ordinary English people are quite without expression in the press. *The Manchester Guardian* still speaks for a thoughtful (but apparently uninfluential!) minority of the public, and there is, of course, a small noisy section represented by the Rothermere type of paper. I think, if I may say so, that in spite of comparative circulation, THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION more nearly represents the feeling of the country than any other paper because so far you have preserved the sensitiveness to see war as a horror and not as an adventure or a joke. This is the attitude of most people this time. No paper comments on the lack of enthusiasm for the war which is the subject on everybody's lips, no journalist reveals the consciousness of an undeserved doom which is felt—and often openly expressed in public places—by our conscript youth. And the feeling grows among people who are not usually articulate that "you can't believe anything in any paper," and that most broadcasts are "dope."

I have no axe to grind nor case to prove, only a deep conviction that someone should say these things while they still may be said, and that if the gulf between press and politicians on the one hand and the people on the other is to widen much further, only catastrophe can await this divided nation.

Two conclusions, I think, may be drawn. One is that the Government should persistently give out both in this country and, as far as possible in Germany, fairly precise terms on which it is prepared to make peace, so that the bulk of the country should have some ground on which to unite. The other—the Government should recognise that in this country propaganda "won't wash." Goebbels has stolen all the thunder. Has anyone ever heard any reaction to the famous "Freedom is in Peril" poster other than the obvious cynical comment?

Heathfield, Sussex. M. M. CHECKSFIELD

DR. JOHNSON ON PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

SIR,—I remember reading in your paper some weeks ago the results of a competition for the best imaginary pronouncements of Doctor Johnson on some modern subjects. One subject was "psycho-analysis." I have just come across a genuine comment on this by the Doctor:—

> . . . He (Mr. Boyd) told us that Lady Errol was one of the most pious and sensible women in the island; had a good head and a good heart. He said she did not use force or fear in educating her children JOHNSON: "Sir, she is wrong; I would rather have the rod to be the general terror to all, to make them learn, than tell a child, if you do thus or thus, you will be more esteemed than your brothers or sisters. The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped, and gets his task, and there's an end on't; whereas, by exciting emulations and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundations of lasting mischief; you make brothers and sisters hate each other."

H.M.S. *Cornelian*. TIM BENNETT

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

THE printing and binding of text-books for schools are still usually so gratuitously squalid that they seem designed to instil in the young a dislike for learning. But I have been reading a recent volume in the Clarendon Series of English Literature, which is a model of book-production as well as of editing, *Arnold, Poetry and Prose*, edited by E. K. Chambers (Oxford University Press, 3*s.* 6*d.*). It includes William Watson's poem, *In Laleham Churchyard* ("Something of worldling lingered still With bard and sage"), Lionel Johnson's Essay on Arnold, and an extract from Professor Garrod's *Poetry and the Criticism of Life*. In his introduction, the editor writes excellently about Arnold's poetry. Here, for instance, are some facts that may be new to many as they were to me. In the later editions of the poems

> there are some amusing alterations due to the increased knowledge of field botany which he acquired in his later years. The original blue convolvulus on the stubble field of *The Gipsy Scholar* becomes a pink one. The reaping scene of *Bacchanalia* is turned into a mowing scene, because the dog-rose is over before harvest-time. The "green fern" of *Tristram and Iseult* gives place to "last year's fern," because that is what you really get in April. Another example of Arnold's desire for literal fidelity of visual rendering is also to be found in *The Scholar Gipsy*. Instead of "the slow punt swings round" he put "the punt's rope chops round." It is less elegant, but the punt at Bablock-Hythe is so fixed as to make a moving bridge which cannot swing round.

The most startling inaccuracy in his poems Arnold never altered. It comes into, or rather it pervades, *The Church of Brou*. I have read—I wish I knew where—the prose description by Edgar Quinet, on which Arnold based his eloquent account of the tomb. He can never have visited Brou, for he places it high in the mountain valleys of Savoy, within easy distance of Chambéry. In fact this peculiarly vulgar edifice is in a suburb of Bourg-en-Bresse, surrounded by a plain of which the only feature is a profusion of the famous white table-fowls. Sir Edmund Chambers's selection of the poetry is excellent. My only criticism is that I should like to see *Growing Old*, a most moving poem, instead of *Bacchanalia* in which are to be found the worst lines Arnold ever wrote: "Look, ah, what genius. Art, science, wit! Soldiers like Caesar, Statesmen like Pitt! Sculptors like Phidias, Raphaels in shoals, Poets like Shakespeare, Beautiful souls!" But perhaps it is good for the young to see to what depths the great can sink. Though the choice of prose-passages is good, the introduction is concerned only with the verse. I should like to recommend strongly Mr. Lionel Trilling's *Matthew Arnold* (Allen and Unwin, 15*s.*). This study of the poet's ideas was one of last year's most valuable and interesting books.

Arnold's prose, like Newman's, is flexible and urbane, but one feels that it has been too much filtered, so that many of the bacteria that give flavour are lost. I am so vulgar as to prefer the gusto of Macaulay, although in music I like a string orchestra better than a brass band. Alike in style and in doctrine Arnold has resisted the depredations of Time far better than his more influential rivals, Ruskin and Carlyle. Even so, a mass of his writing now misses the mark. There is something intellectually disreputable, I consider, in his pleadings for an Established Church, made comprehensive on the basis of almost unlimited scepticism. But one must admit that the pragmatism on which he bases his plea is highly congenial to his tender-minded countrymen. His contempt for Natural Science again is lamentable. I happen to agree that Greek and Latin (and I would add biology) are the best subjects for the education of any child with a taste for letters, but how frivolous are Arnold's gibes, in the *Speech at Eton*, about the diameter of the sun and moon! His literary criticism is often inspired, as in the essay on Wordsworth; and beneath the Attic style one can perceive the profundity of feeling that informs his poetry. But he sometimes suffered from the quality he most deplored, provincial eccentricity. His depreciation of Dryden and Pope may be blamed upon his period, but to call Molière "by far the chief name in French poetry" is positively perverse—especially as Arnold goes on to say that "the freshness and power of Molière are best felt when he uses prose." Another weakness in his criticism is succinctly stated by Professor Garrod:

> He thinks too much of the uses of literature, and too little of its pleasures. He attaches too much importance to tastes and too little to relish. By the waters of Helicon he sits down and sips, sampling them with the meticulous satisfaction of the wine-taster. It is horrible to see him, sometimes, tasting without swallowing.

In *Culture and Anarchy* he declares—and the irony is not total—"I myself am properly a Philistine—Mr. Swinburne would add, the son of a Philistine." (This is a reference to Swinburne's epigram on this champion of culture against Philistia "David the son of Goliath.") Look again at the quotations assembled in his note-books—puritanism is the backbone of his life, and Sir Edmund Chambers justly includes the odd and characteristic outburst against the French worship of "Aselgeia" or Lubricity, "a dangerous and perhaps fatal disease." He was eminently Victorian, not only in his literary criticism, but in his attacks upon Victorianism. When the forts of that folly fell, the bodies by the wall were Pater's and Wilde's and Samuel Butler's rather than Matthew Arnold's.

England has changed so remarkably since Arnold's death that a great part of his social criticism seems only of historical interest. Gone is the heartless optimism that took the degraded industrial towns as a sign of prosperity and progress; gone, or almost gone, the Dissidence of Dissent. Arnold's tireless railing at the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill now seems silly, if not neurotic. He was properly exasperated, of course, by Liberals wasting so much energy on so unimportant a Bill when the whole social structure was desperately unhealthy. He also hated the Bill feverishly as an assault on "delicacy," as if men in the most civilised country had not been contracting such marriages for centuries. But take his chief and repeated indictment of this country—"an upper class materialised, a middle class vulgarised, a lower class brutalised." How far among us have sweetness and light now been spread? The splendid country seats, "great fortified posts of the Barbarians," are many of them turned to schools or lunatic asylums, but has impoverishment improved the aristocracy? Is it more spiritual to write gossip columns than to shoot, is the peer's daughter more enlightened because she has given up hunting and announces in the public press, for pay, that there are no blackheads on her nose? In the middle classes we can no longer see "that forest of firm, serious, unintelligent faces uplifted towards Dr. Spurgeon." Instead we have a forest of flabby, frivolous, unintelligent faces uplifted towards Miss Shirley Temple. This may show an increase in amiability and animal happiness, but hardly in culture. In the Populace the improvement is unquestionable; not so much because a far greater proportion have adapted middle class standards, as because from this class, no less than from the other classes, comes a stream of recruits to civilisation. Slums, however, remain, with the brutality that is their common consequence. On the whole there is far less in this country of the dismalness that depressed Arnold, but only a little more light. "The master-thought by which my politics are governed is rather this—the thought of the bad civilisation of the English middle-class." A Liberal, Arnold devoted most of his assaults to the defects of current Liberalism. If he were alive to-day, his chief butt would similarly, I am sure, be the lack of realism among the "progressive-minded"—the anti-Fascists who howled simultaneously against Hitler and against Conscription, the high-minded sentimentalists who took Russia for a model of democratic enlightenment, the optimistic intellectuals who assume that freedom to criticise bureaucracy can continue, when the abolition of private capital has made every man dependent upon bureaucrats. Because his England was agonising beneath the uncontrolled competition of individual greeds, Arnold emphasised the claims of the community. To-day, I fancy, he might be exercised rather by the growing tyranny of the State. But what is now most urgent in his social criticism is that he attributed the materialism of the Barbarians, the vulgarity of the Philistines and the brutality of the Populace to one cause, Inequality. He contrasted this country with France where

> Whether he mix with high or low, the gentleman feels himself in a world not alien or repulsive, but a world where people make the same sort of demands upon life, in things of this sort, as he does. In all these respects France is the country, where the people, as distinguished from a wealthy refined class, must live what we call a humane life, the life of a civilised man.

In this respect the French still maintain a signal superority. To deny in the seventies, as Arnold did, the natural rights of property, was a signal proof of that disinterestedness, that free play of mind, which was his criterion of culture. The paper on *Equality* from which I have quoted is one of his most thoughtful and persuasive works. It comes in *Mixed Essays*, and a part of it would have added considerably to the merit of Sir Edmund Chambers's excellent primer.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

AN IMPRESSION OF FINLAND

Finland Fights. By H. B. ELLISTON. *Harrap.* 11s.

Mr. Elliston has painted a rapid portrait, as sympathetic as it is sincere, of the Finnish people at war. Too informal to be classed as literature, too spontaneous for the name of journalism, it is a triumph in the art of conversation. The reader feels that he is one of a little group of Mr. Elliston's best friends. With the dust of his travels still upon him, he tells us his story. It pours from him in a rapid stream till he grows hot and breathless. Vivid and picturesque though it is, it tumbles out in perfect order, for this fountain was built foursquare. Mr. Elliston is no amateur traveller: he knew when to shut his eyes and what questions to ask. He can be amusing even when he is describing boredom, and during eight days, when the British Navy isolated his ship in the Shetland Isles, he had his share of it. He can talk politics shrewdly and with wit, as he does in his last chapters, which deals with Sweden's perplexities as a neutral. He can make full use of his training as an economist. But the greater part of the book is a lively description of Finland and the Finns. One grows familiar with their comely yet impassive faces. One seizes the rhythm of their singular language. One watches them during an air raid walking, not running, to one of those shelters which they aptly describe as "bomb-safes." Finns condescend to run only at the Olympian Games. One travels with them in their orderly flight from Helsinki after the first bombardment, and notes that they wear their best clothes and an unruffled smile. One learns to appreciate their grim, ironical humour. I will confess that in recent months I had grown rather tired of reading about their heroism and had become more than a little sceptical. David slew his tens of thousands rather too often. But Mr. Elliston restored my faith, for he based this bravery on history. Centuries of struggle made it, as naturally as the millenia of the ice age made Finnish granite. In the end I found myself echoing the prayer of the Finns that Providence will repeat the miracle of 1918. They prayed that both sides in the world war might be defeated, both Germans and Russians. And that is what happened. It may happen again.

When I ask myself what I have gained from this most readable book, besides some hours of entertainment, the answer groups itself under four heads. First, I have picked up from a scrupulous reporter some rather surprising facts. I did not know that a British ship had been torpedoed by a German submarine in Norwegian territorial waters, deep in Narvik fjord. Nor had I grasped the audacity of German violations of Swedish neutrality —the kidnapping, for example, of a Swedish citizen, on Swedish soil, by the crew of Hitler's armed yacht. I had not heard that the plans of the Mannerheim Line were given to the Russians by a German general, whom his fellow-officers afterwards drove to suicide. It was new to me that Kuusinen, the head of the puppet Red Government of Finland, was tortured in the White Terror: that may explain a good deal.

Secondly, there is in this book by far the fullest and most objective record of the negotiations between the Kremlin and the Finns. Much of what Stalin said is reported, and very illuminating it is. He was engaged in teaching them what was good for them. The new fact is that he did substantially lower his terms. At one moment he dropped his claim to the mainland port of Hango, which the Finns were bound to refuse, and substituted for it an offer to buy some of the larger islands that command this coast. Was that equally impossible? Mr. Elliston admits that Finnish diplomacy was too rigid. In retrospect it seems regrettable. They were, it seems, slow to perceive that Stalin would actually attack them, although when war did begin they supposed that they could resist only for a month.

Next the reader will value the vigorous first-hand portraits of the three outstanding Finns—Mannerheim, the daring and magnetic soldier; Ryti, the brilliant head of the State-owned Central Bank; and Tanner, the Social-Democrat and co-operator. All three live and talk in these pages, and from them we learn much about the recent history of their country. But Mr. Elliston is partial to his sitters. He should have emphasised the fact that Mannerheim sided with the Tsar when his country went on strike against despotism. Nor does he face the heavy responsibility of the Field-Marshal for the White Terror in 1918, when 30,000 men and women, some red, some pink, were executed, or starved to death. That painful episode in Finnish history, with the briefer Red Terror that preceded it, has left a scar still visible to-day.

Lastly, Mr. Elliston succeeds in giving a clear account of the social and economic structure of this unique peasants' democracy, where nine farmers in ten own the soil they till. We realise their passion for equality, their pride of ownership, their respect for law, their high standards of education, their Lutheran piety that recalls the faith of Cromwell's troopers. It is pardonable, if unfortunate, that they have despised the Russians. The Russians can think only in terms of class and the Finns only in terms of nationality.

H. N. BRAILSFORD

BACK TO JONAH

Inside the Whale. By GEORGE ORWELL. *Gollancz.* 7s. 6d.

This book contains three long essays. The first and best, a quasi-political examination of Dickens; the most original, an investigation of boys' magazines, *The Gem*, *The Magnet*, etc., and finally an appreciation of the work of Hy. Miller, the American expatriate novelist whose *Tropic of Cancer* has replaced *Ulysses* as the favourite book of the Dover Customs' Office. The essay on Hy. Miller is a lively, ragged, guerilla attack on the literary political movement of the thirties, now wrecked by the war, and especially on the hacks of "the Party." He urges us to copy Jonah:

> Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism—robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to it. Get inside the whale—or rather admit you are inside the whale (for you *are*, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it. . . . A novel on more positive "constructive" lines, and not emotionally spurious, is at present very difficult to imagine.

A sensible view, up to a point. Novelists are, it is true, far better out of party politics, they either suffer because they have independent minds or the official literature simply gasses them. Leave the Absolute to Stalin, Hitler and Dr. Buchman. But wasn't the conversion to Russian totalitarianism, like the earlier conversion of such writers as Mr. Evelyn Waugh to Roman totalitarianism, which Mr. Orwell discusses very pointedly, an act against our own character? Surely the English reaction to these religions must be

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insular, practical and Protestant, possibly full of humbug but at least free from the rot of casuistry? An English totalitarianism detached from the petticoats of the Scarlet Woman of the Kremlin—petticoats with an unmotherly tendency to stray—might be congenial to English writers. But Mr. Orwell's native and sensible protestantism has a defeatist streak in it. He has a nostalgia for despair, a nose over-eager for the reek of the decay of civilisation. It was the smell of decay—I remember—which dominated his impression of the Spanish civil war.

The attraction of Mr. Orwell's writing is its lucid revelation of a mind that is alive, individual and non-conforming, often spiteful, but always unfrightened and fighting in the open. He writes the clear, fast-moving, conversational English of the "familiar style" of which Hazlitt was the master. It is the English of the common man cured of the common man's stutter, and it is addressed to him. For, in the West, the common man is not an abstraction; he is, as Mr. Orwell says, a definite anthropological item in the liberal-Christian culture. Dickens addressed him with success. Perhaps the day of the common man is over, that is to say the day of the man who has no secret police to fear, who believes in "decency" and generosity; if so, then the reign of Dickens in that English tradition is over too, Mr. Orwell says. Dickens does not reform, he does not actually rebel, he is not a revolutionary; it is indeed easy to show that Dickens would stand condemned as a reactionary by default; but he does protest. He protests again and again. And though it is hard to estimate the practical effect of moral protest, there is no doubt that liberal England was a good deal more sensitive to moral protest than to riot or action. And still is, I should say. Marxists who make fun of English moral feeling because it is frequently used as a velvet glove for an iron hand, should count up the number of times the English have used the iron hand without the velvet glove. The hand could not move without it.

The essay on Dickens is admirable for the freshness of its thought. The quasi-political approach owes something to Marxism but is made with a real suppleness. The essay is even more admirable because Mr. Orwell has not been infected by Dickens. The detractors of Dickens detach him from his time and pick him over with the minor cattiness of a provincial Watch Committee. His enlightened admirers like Mr. G. K. Chesterton and Mr. Osbert Sitwell say some good things but Dickens has sent up their temperature. Dickens was a man in a fever and he relies on creating the same fever in the reader. He proceeds by incantation—the repetition of single words, the word "facts" in *Hard Times*, for example—one knows he is going to be bad when the incantation gives place to the blank verse of his sentimental realism, and one simply skips it. Uninfected, Mr. Orwell takes his own line. In doing so he neglects a few matters of literary interest such as Dickens's sense of nightmare which sprang from the fears of his childhood. It was this quality which recommended him to the Russian novelists. The French, the Spaniards and the Russians have a Dickens very different from our own. He is, they detected, a morbid writer.

Mr. Orwell's fundamental point (and it is really the theme underlying all three essays in this book) is that there are two hostile yet complementary revolutionary views. They are the moral and the social; and Dickens chose the former. You either believe in a change of spirit or in a change of structure. No change is worth making unless you ensure that the new possessors of power are more moral than their predecessors. For the purposes of party politics this can be called a reactionary view, though in fact it is held by reactionaries and revolutionaries of the very opposite intentions. As Mr. Orwell says, this moral view is very lower middle class. The little bourgeois who has fought his way above the poverty line is simply turning his gains into morality. But the distinction nevertheless cuts through the class question, for the disillusion which always follows violent revolution is moral. The new power-holders are not moral. What Mr. Orwell should have pointed out is that Dickens's moral uplift has a generous meaning only in a time of expanding wealth.

The class divisions in England are very complex. Thus, in saying that Dickens has the views of a lower middle class man of his time, Mr. Orwell points out that he belonged to the southern commercial class which was completely cut off from the knowledge of what goes on in industrial towns. Dickens mentions no contemporary inventions, prefers coach to train; his industrial city (in *Hard Times*) is a southerner's nightmare seen from the outside. There is only one industrial worker, Stephen, who appears in this novel; he is a blackleg and Dickens admires him for it. Dickens had the romanticism of the commercial class who saw the workers in terms of their servants only and who had no interest in the new work. It is to this ignorance of what was really happening in English society that Mr. Orwell, rather interestingly, traces the great length and complicated plots of the novels. Serialisation was not alone the cause. A novelist can escape from his own ignorance by complicating his plots; and Dickens, always outside, ever "aware of appearances but ignorant of processes," was obliged to spread himself. This was, of course, not fatal to his genius; a novelist is constantly obliged to turn his shortcomings into virtues. It is, moreover, general human experience to see more than we understand. Mr. Orwell is simply describing the fantasticating "eye" of Dickens in a new way.

Dickens had the typical ideology of his class. He hated crime and violence; criminals did not interest him—he dreads and loathes Sikes and Fagin morally—he has the "I've kept myself respectable" note (which I heard again from provincial railway workers at the time of the evacuation), he ignores war, has no love of England or Imperialism in the upper middle-class sense, he is physically unheroic, is bored by fisticuffs. He is frightened out of his life by "the mob," and in his time there was an English mob. He believes in the benevolence of comfortably-off men, the magic of food, and that "to retire" after being "something abroad" or "in the City" and live in idleness and blameless domesticity is to have one's dreams of earthly happiness fulfilled. For a class who were killing themselves with overwork in the name of personal progress or the moral value of "getting on," the last was a natural fantasy. The mental and emotional unhappiness of the lower middle class which has led them in the last generation to fatal quarrels with their families, the break-up of the Victorian home, to competitive independence and to vague nostalgies for a father or leader who will make it all right once more, is exemplified in the hysterical disequilibrium of Dickens's character and in the wish which every one like him shared. It is plain that the Radical energies of Dickens are addressed not to the heads of the politically minded or to turning the wheel of reform—to say nothing of revolution—but to the heart. He asked for decency, goodness, kindness and mercy. And the need for ordinary decency is not lessened by the purely political discovery that "decency" is the tool of class interests. (Himself strongly anti-Catholic, Dickens pleads for the Catholic who is persecuted.) Mr. Orwell says he will last as long as this common liberality of heart is allowed to last. It has lasted longer in Western Europe than elsewhere because civilisation is deeper there.

V. S. PRITCHETT

THE ENDING TO "CHRISTABEL"

The Road to Tryermaine: A Study of the History, Background and Purposes of Coleridge's "Christabel." By ARTHUR H. NETHERCOT. *Cambridge University Press.* 18s.

With *The Road to Xanadu* Professor Livingston Lowes discovered a new and fascinating critical approach. He took two poems of Coleridge that seem magically ringed-off, "The Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan," and by elaborate research was able to track them down almost word by word through the mazes of the poet's reading. It is a method that might be applied to other writers in whom pure vision and a prowling memory work together; unfortunately, in such cases, clues are generally lacking. Mental biography of this kind, to be of value, must be as exact, as rich in associations as Proust. Coleridge seems the ideal subject (he described himself once as "a library cormorant"), and to Professor Lowes's monumental work is now added a postscript by Mr. Nethercot. His 230 pages are restricted to "Christabel," the third of Coleridge's great poems. The fact that Professor Lowes stopped short of "Christabel," not because it was outside his scheme, but from lack of material, shows the difficulties that Mr. Nethercot had to meet.

The problem was twofold. How far could "Christabel," like "The Ancient Mariner," be related to sources in Coleridge's reading? And, assuming results here, what light could be thrown on the poem—the unwritten as well as the written portions? For it is hardly possible to "explain" the fragment that has come down to us (less than half, probably, of the whole) without knowing an outline of the rest. Coleridge himself insisted more than once that the idea of the poem came to him entire and that only the difficulty of execution prevented his finishing it: somewhere, then, recoverable by analysis, there might be hints of that ending? It will be seen that this is the sort of investigation in which facts

may easily dissolve into speculation. And that, I think, is what has happened with Mr. Nethercot. He has made a number of discoveries—but there aren't quite enough of them; he goes on to make guesses, and we may or may not agree.

His chief discovery (and it acts like a photographer's flash) is that the Lady Geraldine, the fair and terrible visitant, is a vampire. Not all vampires have claws and suck blood; here is an unfortunate being doomed to perform a task which at moments she knows to be odious. But according to Mr. Nethercot, her behaviour, when we look nearer, accords closely with the type: she cannot pass over a threshold without being lifted, she faints at the sight of a lamp swinging from an angel's feet, she seeks refreshment from another's bed, communicates her own serpent-like qualities to her victim; and so on. How far is this *literal* interpretation of Geraldine's actions—if we ignore the shifted emphasis of poetry—correct? Mr. Nethercot makes it seem convincing. What is certain is that Coleridge had steeped himself in the study of vampires, lamias, serpent-women, medical demonology, transmigration of souls and kindred subjects, and that the "fair Geraldine" was the result, distilled from many sources, of this reading.

That disposes, fairly satisfactorily, of what Mr. Nethercot calls "the central problem": Geraldine and the nature of her influence over Christabel. But it does not, in fact, take us so very far. Geraldine, after all, is only instrumental. More important, if correct, is the martyrdom Coleridge had in mind for Christabel. Thomas Allsop records Coleridge as saying that the following lines from Crashaw's poem on St. Teresa were present to him all the while he was writing Christabel:

> Since 'tis not to be had at home,
> She'l travail to a martyrdome.
> No home for her confesses she
> But where she may a martyr be.
> She'l to the Moores, and trade with them
> For this invalued diadem,
> She offers them her dearest breath
> With Christ's name in 't, in change for death . . .

Teresa died (at home, by the way) a martyr to heavenly love. "Christabel's fate," concludes Mr. Nethercot, "so far as can be hazarded, was to lie in the consummation of her earthly love; her marriage was to be with her lover, not with Christ. Yet her name—with 'Christ's name in it,' as in Teresa's 'dearest breath'—was to stand for vicarious atonement and suffering for the sake of others, just as was the saints." The only hint of all this, in Coleridge's poem as it stands, is the detail that Christabel goes out into the wood to pray for her lover. Can this, indeed, have been the development that appeared to Coleridge with "the loveliness of a vision" and a subtlety that he found it impossible to denote in poetry? So many elements went to the making of "Christabel"—the Gothic romance as well as St. Teresa, *The Arabian Nights* as well as Hutchinson's *History of the County of Cumberland*—that it is just conceivable. One can't rule out Mr. Nethercot's interpretation altogether, though his evidence is hardly imposing. The trouble is that "Christabel" has become fixed in our minds as a fragment, and any suggested ending is apt to appear unconvincing.

On a number of lesser points the value of Mr. Nethercot's detective-work is undoubted: names in the poem, books borrowed by Coleridge from the Bristol Library, the sources of several passages in Coleridge's travels, etc. He gives an amusing review of earlier interpretations: the prize goes to Hazlitt who believed (or pretended to believe) that Geraldine was a man. *The Road to Tryermaine* is not as conclusive or absorbing as its predecessor, but for anyone who is an admirer of "Christabel" and does not mind looking at it as one does at a problem picture, it is worth reading.

G. W. STONIER

NEW NOVELS

The Power and the Glory. By GRAHAM GREENE. *Heinemann.* 8*s.* 3*d.*

I Shall Not Want. By NORMAN COLLINS. *Gollancz.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

Let My People Go. By CEDRIC BELFRAGE. *Gollancz.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Venus in Scorpio. By MURRAY CONSTANTINE and MARGARET GOLDSMITH. *Bodley Head.* 9*s.* 6*d.*

The Crazy Hunter. By KAY BOYLE. *Faber.* 8*s.* 3*d.*

The easy way with Mr. Graham Greene is to describe him as a writer of thrillers of the psychological variety and to dodge away in that direction. Contemporary taste is all for insulation of this character and one is educated to develop protective pads on one's

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mind just as boxers take the tenderness off their skin by rubbing down with dry loofah sponges, good taste being the loofah. Mr. Evelyn Waugh is cushioned off as a humourist and one runs more than a risk of being thought a prig if one describes his novels as pessimistic tracts; there is a considerable barrier between the casual reader and the snarl behind most of the jokes: "this is the sort of horror you find funny," the feeling being as strong and as much against the reader as it is in *Gulliver*. To think of his books in this way lets one in for a disagreeable experience which can be avoided if one gallops off on the good old "sense of humour." The end of the book *Vile Bodies* can be read with ease as an elegant indelicacy out of the Crébillon basket; when it was made into a play, the final little teasing erotic passage appeared unmistakably as the thumping preacher's body-blow it was meant to be. The audience trooped out in considerable irritation saying that the book had been spoilt in being adapted to the stage. One can very easily make the same mistake with Mr. Greene; *The Power and the Glory* is an exciting book about a man on the run, a chase full of hairbreadth escapes and the sure-fire Orczy stuff. One can have a cosy time giving oneself up to the thrills and not worrying about the content. It is after all a partisan view of the situation in a particular part of Mexico coloured by the religious opinions of the writer, no need to worry. The gloom and the manifest prejudice make it all the more exciting, like going to a German crook film after a run of American ones. It makes a nice change to have a priest running from atheists instead of a killer running from G Men, and after all it's a novel and all in fun. The fact is that the book is a fierce statement of a case which is worth considering. Here, says Mr. Greene, is the abundant disorder that has followed government under the Liberal Fallacy in Mexico, this is the loathsome way people behave if they are given their heads. Against his background of squalor and violence he has set a priest who is almost everything he should not be, a coward, a drunkard, the father of a child. But feeble as he is, the Religion gives him something greater than virtue in its Roman sense, and even gives the weakling the power to give strength to other people. It is in fact a parable about the importance of Religion to the Individual and to Society told with great skill and power, and all the more interesting because it is so fundamentally opposed to everything for which Liberalism stands. But in contrast to the vague benevolence of Liberalism it is based on a system of thought, all its elements are worked out and there is no doubt about it. As a manifestation of the intellectual side of the Catholic Church it is very well worth thinking about. The following remarks were written about another enemy in 1915 but they seem applicable:

> At least the Germans stand for something. It may be brutal, stupid, intolerable but there it is—a definite intention, a scheme of living, an order, Germanic Kultur. But what the devil do we stand for? Was there anything that amounted to an intellectual life at all in our beastly welter of writing, of nice young man poetry, of stylish fiction and fiction without style, of lazy history, popular philosophy, slobbering criticism, academic civilities? Is there anything here to hold a people together? Is there anything to make a new world?

Reading this book and thinking about its clearly defined attitude to Individual Rights, its clear ideas about Duty, and the certainty with which the author is able to say where he stands, the same questions occur to one almost inescapably. Almost, by avoiding the mean streets of our cities and not reading the *News of the World*, it is possible to believe that Mr. Greene is guilty of grotesque over-statement about human weakness, the story is also as exciting as the new Lemmy Caution and—oh, there are a great many ways of evading notice of the strength of the enemy and the weakness into which our own case has been allowed to drift.

Mr. Norman Collins' huge novel, *I Shall Not Want*, also has a religious background, but the sect concerned is Baptist Dissension. Carefully and accurately built up as the setting is, the story labours under a number of handicaps, the chief of which is that the hero has a name which carries one off to the circus whenever it comes up, John Marco. No amount of talking about his wing collar and his shopman's manner can get one away from the feeling that he ought to be bouncing cannonballs on his forearms. The second is that the novel runs to 542 pages and the story won't stand it. The first 250 pages are covered with a rather good old-fashioned novel about a member of a strict Baptist sect who robs a dying man and is blackmailed by his daughter into marriage. The morality is soundly Victorian about the corrupting power of money, the consequences of loveless marriage are rammed home, and the characters have a delightfully bad time. However, after page 252 they start all over again having a bad time for the same reasons and the plot is complicated by an elaborate anecdote concerning the development of a big shop, which is singularly unconvincing, a great pity for the first half of the book is very enjoyable.

Against the incandescence of Mr. Greene's faith and the anthropologist's objectivity of Mr. Collins, *Let My People Go* has a comic effect. The central figure is a presbyterian minister of warm emotions but without any foundation for belief whatever. Starting as a Fundamentalist he drifts steadily through the modern heresies until he lands up talking of Moses as a militant unionist, the Exodus a mass demonstration, and the events in Jerusalem as another monster demo. The story of this prophet of the gospel according to Marx is told with a sustained vulgarity of thought worthy of the thesis that the true Christian must be a Communist. As the Duke said, "If you can believe that, you can believe anything."

What went on in the stuffy, stinking bedrooms of Versailles while France was encountering the distresses of national bankruptcy has a certain gossip interest heightened by the machine which put an end to all those complicated affairs. Marie Antoinette herself is the central figure of *Venus in Scorpio*, which goes into her various amours with careful attention to the enormous number of gossip books about the Court and produces an acceptable account of it all. Of her stupid and tactless interventions in diplomatic affairs, always against the interests of France, there is nothing. But then, as the authors say, this is a novel and not a historical treatise, the theme is Louis the Sixteenth's horns and where they came from. A very long book about a very vapid woman.

In *The Crazy Hunter* Miss Kay Boyle gives an exhibition of her virtuosity in three short stories. The first is about a blind horse and is a brilliant piece of writing about feelings, one of the best horsy stories written since that animal became intellectually tabu as a philistine totem. What people like about horses, and dealing with horses, is conveyed with considerable elegance and the personal situation of the people in the story built up with some force. The content of the second and third stories is tenuous to the point of invisibility, but the writing and the imagery are so delightful that they can be enjoyed as soap bubbles can be enjoyed.

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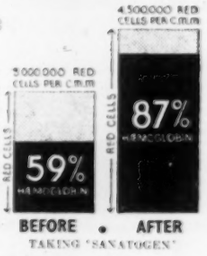

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THE MODERN ARMY

Deadlock War. By TOM WINTRINGHAM. *Faber and Faber.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

In *Deadlock War* Tom Wintringham develops in fuller detail the argument of his brilliant *Fact* pamphlet, and applies the moral to the present military situation and in particular to the structure of the British Army. He argues that the central problem of strategy is to find a way out of the present impasse of "position-war," but that this cannot be done by the use of the aeroplane against the civilian population, and only with enormous losses and risks by flanking movements on the Western Front. Both for defence and for attack new tactics are necessary and, even more fundamental than new tactics, a new type of soldier.

In the central portion of the book Mr. Wintringham bases his reasoning first on an analysis of the German methods at the close of the last war—infiltration and elastic defence—and secondly on his own experiences with the Republican Army in Spain. He is convinced that increased fire-power has made the old tradition of discipline inadequate, by compelling armies to operate with small groups of men, relatively isolated from one another and therefore forced to act on their own initiative, though they cannot be commanded by officers. Whether in attack or defence the modern army cannot rely on the herd-discipline of the mass-attack or of the thin red-line: even the smallest unit must be led by a man who can read a map, grasp a very general plan of campaign valid for two or three days and use his own discretion in filling in the details. If war is not to degenerate into the immobility of gigantic armies, paralysed by the centralisation of the command and the mute obedience of the commanded, the higher authorities must be ready to scrap the strategy and tactics which have ossified into ceremonial traditions; and the training of the junior officers and N.C.O.s must be thought out afresh. This lesson, Mr. Wintringham suggests, the Germans have already learnt, though the *Führerprinzip* prevents, in his opinion, the elasticity of mind necessary for carrying it out with complete success.

Mr. Wintringham's argument is so important that it is a pity he weakens it by infusions of tepid Marxism. He seems to assume that the development of military tactics is a consequence always of social evolution; and when he is faced by the awkward fact that it was the German High Command which discovered the virtues of "elastic defence," he takes refuge in the assertion that Ludendorf, the son of an estate agent in Prussia, represented a class which "was in Germany still fundamentally a progressive class."

> . . . Ludendorf was personally autocratic and a sincere admirer of Bismark and the Prussian kings. But what a man is, or feels and thinks he is, often counts less than what he represents in the growth and decay of social classes. Ludendorf represented Germany's progressive, scientific modern culture . . . and it was as the representative of these forces that he played his part in shaping the tactics that could only be carried out by educated, independent and self-respecting men.

I suspect that this is just sociological poppycock. In social history, though it is true that certain *ideas* cannot be carried out except by new classes, the discoverer of those ideas may belong to any, even the most reactionary, class. What is important is not the class-pedigree of the inventor, but the social conditions in which his invention must be realised.

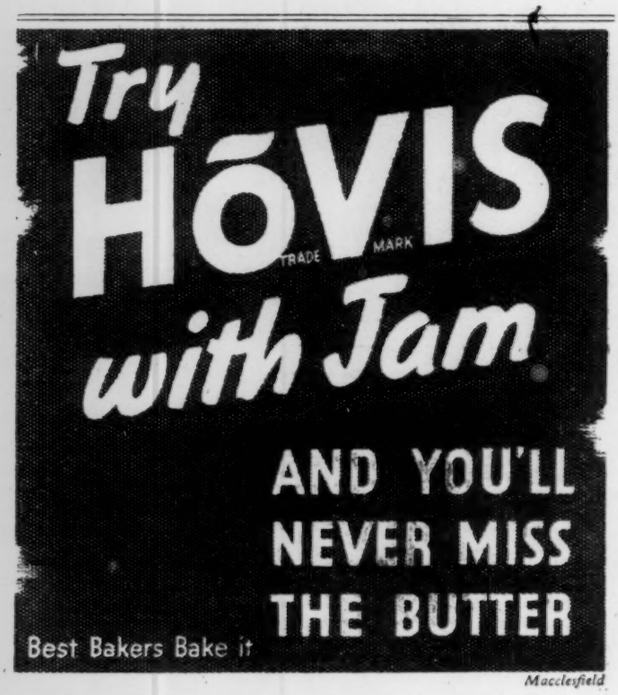
A similar fault spoils his concluding chapters on the British Army. The new wine of the militia will either burst the old bottles of the Guards tradition or else lapse into boredom and discontent, and this development will only be intensified by mechanisation and its consequent influx into the ranks of a more intelligent type than the old regular. But Mr. Wintringham glumly concludes from this that the British Army "cannot change while Britain remains what it is" and seems to predicate a social revolution as the presupposition of military efficiency. This view contradicts his own theory about Ludendorf and is obviously at variance with the facts. War itself is a solvent of social institutions and may compel the arch conservative to adopt methods which undermine his most cherished institutions. There remains therefore an open question: either no military reforms occur, in which case we cannot win and may lose the war, or they do occur and prepare the way for social change. But even here one must be careful. Mr. Wintringham seems to identify the Left with the sort of individual initiative which the modern soldier needs, the Right (and Fascism) with the tradition of automatism. It is a tempting assumption, but less convincing after Germany's Polish campaign or the Soviet's attack on Finland. There is not much evidence either that the young Nazis are deficient in self-reliance and initiative or that the Russians are remarkable for those qualities. There is evidence that the Finns, in contrast with the Russians, have used precisely the tactics approved by Mr. Wintringham, and used them with conspicuous success. What is really important for the modern army is firstly youth and vigour and modern education in the High Command and secondly a supply of N.C.O.s who have been taught to think for themselves. Without any preliminary social revolution the British Army may achieve both these objectives, simply because it will find that defeat is unavoidable without them, and that the morale of intelligent militiamen cannot be maintained by inefficient officers or the automatism of the Guards tradition.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

The Jackdaw's Nest. A Fivefold Anthology. Edited by GERALD BULLETT. *Macmillan.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

After reading most of the many recent admonitions not to neglect literature in wartime, one must be struck by the assumption common to nearly all that literature is not contemporary literature. Even Mr. E. M. Forster left the living out of it and urged us to the glorious dead, perhaps on the unconscious feeling that we should soon be joining them and had better make our peace with the unread classics while there is still time. If it were not so current among our elders and betters, this idea that there is nothing in contemporary culture which will help to preserve our sanity in time of war, would be amusing; as it is widespread one must, I suppose, take it to be part of the common disaster. Yet it pre-dates the war; in the introduction to his anthology which was compiled before the war and makes admirable wartime reading of the unharassing kind, Mr. Bullett explains that his book contains "nothing merely painful, nothing calculated (as to-day so much printed matter necessarily is) to assault the emotions and lacerate the nerves to no purpose." Reassuring and defensible, but it is reminiscent of the general attack on literature since 1918, and one is not surprised to find that its modern side is the lame part of this anthology.

For the rest it is fresh and diverse. Mr. Bullett has avoided most of the set anthology pieces. His selection of long poems, here at full length, includes Chaucer's *Chauntecleer and Pertelote* and *The Wanderings of Oisin*. His longer prose includes a good wad of Rabelais, Swift on the Houyhnhnms, some Gibbon and that lovely diatribe of Cobbett's on the vice of tea-drinking. Lost in one of his lesser-known books, this piece of Cobbett's was worth a revival. And the search for the unusual has led Mr. Bullett to such things as the very apposite trial of Wm. Penn and Wm. Mead. The selection is personal and unconventional; it is also tendentious. The total success of a book like this depends on whether you are, like Mr. Bullett, a sort of near-Churchman broadening down from precedent to precedent. The reflective, the general, the discursive are his bent. There are no stories of action. There is no travel; you escape to equanimity and not overseas. In essay or story his line is innuendo, irony and the ethical enlivened by philosophical science and psychology. His Wodehouse, his Frank Connor and his Frank Sullivan (the cliché expert) are refreshing, but his Rabelais is sedate and his Wells distinctly woolly. *The Door in the Wall* is both a poor and a dated story. But Mr. Bullett goes far and



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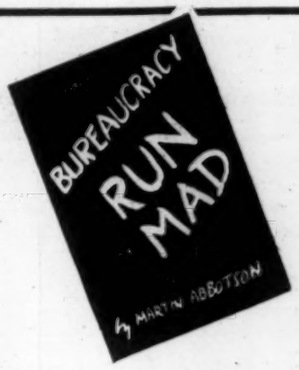

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In the form of letters written during a long, dangerous and painful illness, Mrs. St. Aubyn recounts her conversion to Catholicism. She does not discuss the intellectual arguments, thinking, no doubt, that these have already been expounded by more learned pens, but she expresses vividly the appeal of the Church to the feelings and her book is likely to give great pleasure to many who share her sentiments. Students of the psychology of religion will be interested in her account of the mystical experience that decided her to make her submission. "Suddenly the room seemed to fade. I heard your pen scratching as you wrote, then that, too, ceased to strike my senses. Instead, I only saw a great white light. I can only use the word Radiant. It was opaque, but shone and dazzled me. It was soundless, heatless, shapeless, motionless, yet vividly alive light. The whole impression lasted only a second. . . . Without volition, or act on my part, I knew that I believed." Mrs. St. Aubyn was born in an Islamic country, and emphasises the impression made upon her by a society in which the ways of life described in the Bible still continue. Her book will not appeal to intellectuals, whether Catholics or not, but it expresses very effectively the gratitude of a believer for the consolation afforded by the mysteries of the Old Religion.

SPRING BOOKS

The catalogue of forthcoming books of the Oxford University Press did not reach us in time for inclusion in our list published last week. The following selection is made from a fine programme that appears not to have been in any way impoverished by wartime conditions.

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W. B. YEATS. Letters on Poetry to Dorothy Wellesley. 8*s.* 6*d.*
A Survey of the Social Services in the Oxford District. II. Local Administration in a Changing Area. 21*s.*

GRAMOPHONE NOTES

DEFIANCE, eroticism and innocence appear to be the emotions most feasibly communicable in music; yet it is a strange coincidence that the Fifth Symphonies of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius should all be so clearly concerned with shaking an heroic fist in the face of death. To be sure, the attitude varies greatly: Beethoven claims the stocky independence of his soul, Tchaikovsky cries out for help against the assaults of evil, and Sibelius . . .? It is difficult to describe the quality of the latter's strange work; obviously it ranks with the heroic, but the emotion is unevenly sustained: the slow movement threatens at any moment to break into "*O sole mio.*" Yet the first and last movements are models of symphonic music; Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra (H.M.V.) give a performance which in richness and volume is superior to that of Kajanus—now several years old. But there is some coarseness in the recording and I find it hard to forgive the hurrying up of the final bars of the work. Those who possess the original recording are not advised to abandon it. Again, almost any of the existing sets of the Beethoven *Symphony No.* 5 is superior to that now issued by the Parlophone Co. and played by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Hermann Abendroth. The first phrase is played as if it were a triplet and the rest of the performance is on this level of care, besides which the violin tone is often very thin and poor in the higher registers. Altogether a sadly mediocre affair. The Tchaikovsky comes off very much better, in the hands of Sir Thomas Beecham and the London Philharmonic (Col.). This performance does not add anything to what we already knew about the symphony, but perhaps that is impossible in the nature of the case; for this is superficial music, in spite of its grandiose pretensions. There is no point in enlarging here on Tchaikovsky's inability to think on a symphonic scale; the *Fifth Symphony* contains some exquisite music—notably in the slow movement—and Beecham produces it with a magician's resourcefulness. At the opposite pole of music stands Bach's very famous *Suite in D*, which contains the Air so frequently played by violinists on the G string. Weingartner and the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra (Col.) give a most distinguished performance, full of subtle understatements, and the recording is unimpeachable. Equally to be recommended is the performance, by the same team, of the *Prelude* to the *Third Act* of *Tannhäuser* (Col.). This grave, disquieting movement contains some of the best music in the opera and gives a foretaste of *Parsifal*. An expression of the hero's state of mind after his pilgrimage to Rome, it proceeds in a strangely fitful manner, as if it were being blown to and from one by a gusty wind; in the end it vanishes rather than stops. Here romantic methods of composition are pushed rather far—much farther than in Weber's enchanting *Concertino* for clarinet and orchestra (Col.), which is yet romantic in feeling and freely rhapsodic in form. Reginald Kell, admirably abetted by Walter Goehr, treats the whole thing as the coloratura scena it is, and one is left wishing that sopranos sounded like this more often than they do. All music-lovers are

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urged to acquire this beautiful record. Anyone wishing to possess the overtures to Mozart's *Figaro* and *Die Entführung* together on one record, will be quite well served by Karl Böhm and the Saxon State Orchestra (H.M.V.). The recording is somewhat impaired by echo, but the performance is good enough. Sir Thomas Beecham and the London Philharmonic, combining in Strauss' *Voices of Spring* waltz (Col.), give a colourable imitation of Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic; but it is an imitation, nevertheless—not the real thing. The tempi are too rigid and the whole effect lacks that extraordinary caressive quality which only Viennese orchestras were able to achieve. Yet at least the music has here a genuine sound, which is more than can be said of Weinberger's *Variations and Fugue* for full orchestra on "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree." The composer of *Schwanda* is an adroit musician, with a shrewd eye on popular taste, and these variations are agreeable, ingenious and well made; but they have not a single jot of originality or distinction. An admirable performance, by the London Philharmonic under Constant Lambert (H.M.V.), helps to create an illusion of charm and brilliance; but the final impression is one of nullity. Unacceptable for other reasons is Toscanini's version, for the full strings of the N.B.C. Orchestra (H.M.V.), of the *Adagio* from Beethoven's *Quartet in F*, op. 135. The effect of this arrangement is even more harmonium-like than it was in the *Scherzo*, recently published, of the same work. This was a most unfortunate experiment and I cannot recommend it. Great conductors must be allowed their quirks, but it seems a pity to perpetuate them.

Some chamber music sets of the very highest quality and interest have just been made by the Decca Company. Mozart's *Duets* for violin and viola, in G (K423) and B flat (K424), are among the marvels of music. With only two voices at his command, he gives the impression of four; the beauty of the themes is profound and the composition throughout a miracle of technical virtuosity; there is no feeling of emptiness, of the voices' lacking support. Frederick Grinke and Watson Forbes give an absolutely sure and most sensitive performance of these exquisite works, which are in no sense miniature in spite of the economy of the means used. If Mendelssohn's creative powers had kept pace with the development of his technique, the *Cello Sonatas* (No. 1 in B flat, op. 41; No. 2 in D, op. 68) might well be as great works as the Mozart *Duets*. But by the time he came to write these sonatas, his inspiration had begun to run out; little is left save beauty of structure and the sheer loveliness of harmonious sounds: the thematic material is of second-rate quality. The allegro movements are feverish and empty, their rhythm too unbroken. The second sonata would be on the whole the better of the two, were it not spoilt by a dragging, sanctimonious adagio. Yet both sonatas impose themselves; musicians especially will delight in the superb workmanship displayed and in the quite startlingly fine performance of a new duet of players, William Pleeth and Margaret Good. May one hope that they will be asked to record Beethoven's *Cello Sonata in D*, op. 102—a set of which we are badly in need?

The piano records, this month and last, are of unequal value. Schnabel is an executant of indubitable power and intellect, but his pedantic style is ill-suited to Mozart's *Sonata in A minor* (K 310), (H.M.V.), which requires a certain lyrical spontaneity in the player—a quality in which Schnabel is conspicuously lacking. Such music, when laboriously "explained," tends to sound merely jejune. Louis Kentner, always at his best in Liszt, gives a fine account of the *Etudes de Concert in F minor* and *D flat* (Col.). His rendering of Schumann's *Arabesque* (Col.), on the other hand, is spoilt by a callous, unyielding upper part. The fidgety *Impromptu in A flat* is one of Schubert's emptiest compositions, but Eileen Joyce plays it about as well as possible (Parl.). Another fine pianist, Claudio Arrau, gives Debussy's *Danse* and *Jardins sous la Pluie* (Parl.); his rendering of the first is very rich and sensitive, but I prefer Gieseking in the second. In all these records the level of recording is consistently high.

Finally, two 10-inch vocal records. *The Star of County Down*, an old Irish air, is thrown off by John McCormack (H.M.V.) with a lightness and mastery that take one's breath away. The subtlety of the singer's rhythm, his marvellous diction, his gaiety and ease: all combine to make this disc indispensable. The tune, a modal one, is exceptionally charming. If not the equal of McCormack, Jussi Björling is yet a tenor of great charm; the youthfulness of his voice is most attractive and well-suited to Strauss's *Morgen* and *Cäcilie* (H.M.V.). Unfortunately, he is accompanied, and rather feebly, by a piano. The wild eroticism of *Cäcilie* is better served by an orchestra, and so are the long, held chords at the end of *Morgen*—of which song, in any case, Elizabeth Schumann's recording remains unsurpassed.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

An introduction, a warning and an invitation

INTRODUCTION.

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Qui sur un débris mort jette un printemps nouveau.
Venez parer mon deuil et verdir mes ruines:
Le lierre aime un vieux chêne, un désert, un tombeau.

Frais comme vous, le lierre à travers les épines
Glisse, et conquiert lui seul un antique château;
Ou, confondu là-bas aux mousses enfantines
Il invite à s'asseoir deux amis du coteau.

Venez: j'abriterai contre les vents, les grêles,
Vos jours, et le trésor de vos boutons si frêles
Pour de jeunes amours qu'il fleurisse demain.

Viens t'appuyer sur moi dans ta conscience altière . . .
Quand tu devrais briser, comme fait l'autre lierre,
Pour t'en former un sol, le dur ciment romain.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Thursday, March 21st.

2. Competitors may use a pseudonym. Typescript is not insisted on, but writing must be on one side of the paper only.

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3. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

4. No competitor is eligible for more than one prize in any one week.

The result of last week's competition will be announced in our next issue.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 525

Set by Sam Smiles

A first prize of Two Guineas and a second prize of Half a Guinea are offered for the best extracts (not more than 20 lines) from a poem in the style of Browning, entitled *The Dictator Orders His Tomb*.

Report by Sam Smiles

Browning's prodigious understanding of the Italian Renaissance is nowhere more dazzling than in *The Bishop Orders His Tomb in Saint Praxed's Church*, and evidently competitors could not be expected to bring a similar gusto to the portraiture of our Dictators. Almost all picked the Austrian; and where the Bishop was concerned to have finer Latinity than his old rival, Gandolph, the House-Painter was made to cast a jealous eye eastwards at the Bank-Robber.

What then? Let Stalin's pyramid of skulls
Seem but an ant-heap to my Munich Mount!
(Muriel K. Fudge).

Now shall I laugh
As on the plains I stand five times as high—
Did I say five? Nay, ten! Six thousand feet
No less; ye promise it!—And eastward watch
Joe peeling in his rusty chromium. (Richard Hitch).

J. M. Stoddart begins: "Bring porphyry—a ton will be enough." Redling is more spirited:

A square mile in the capital's centre,
Razed to the ground, shops, houses, ruthlessly—
A mighty mound of soil, pure Aryan soil
No Jew has ever tilled . . .

Margaret Eliot prefers naturalism:

A tomb of alabaster, wrought in spires
Fluted and carved like frozen ferns, all white
Shining and burning in the sun—live fire
With a great eagle bursting from the midst—

Charles Furbank takes a different metre:

Grind on a mountain my features,
Then sell as Saint's relics the dust.
Hell take your marble and preachers;
I'll not be content with a bust.

F. W. Reed suggests as tomb the *Deutschland* (scuttled), J. W. F. Hurford places the Dictator at St. Helena, calling for Jews' heads, I. H. B. makes him ask for sculpture by Epstein. Little Billee has:

The Alp I chose to be my pyramid,
The mountain to be carved my monument,

ending with "How he would laugh at me, The old man in his tower at Tannenberg!" Alixandre spoiled a very brilliant ending by not making the Pleiades plural. Here's the beginning:

Out of Carrara (could we dispense with it?)
Sky-reaching pillars, alt to altissimo;
Sun-stained gilding (and hang the expense of it):
Laurels? What matter, for such generalissimo?

If N. Lewis had been as brilliant in ideas as in style, he could have won at a canter. I recommend him for Second Prize, and the First to be divided between Hassall Pitman and John Mair.

FIRST PRIZE
THE DICTATOR ORDERS HIS TOMB

Stoop lower Hermann! Curses on the breath
That rasps my burning throat. Can'st hear me, man?
Closer—a secret—*not* immortal, I,
Soon death with pride will greet his Suzerain.
My tomb then! Listen! I would have it press
Upon the very heart of what was England
Beneath the braggart dome that flaunts the name
Of that poor, twisted, jabbering little Jew
St. Paul. See to it Hermann! On this scroll
Is traced in Nordic blood my own design—
Gather from conquered realms the impious guns
That dared defiance. Melt and mould the mass
Into one mighty pediment. Fling down
The Ball and Cross, and piercing through the gap,
All highest, let my iron statue stab
The firmament. And, chiefest charge of all,
Smug Chamberlain, damned Churchill, and their spawn
Forever, fettered at its foot, by night and day,
Shall keep perpetual ward. See to it! Heil.

HASSALL PITMAN

FIRST PRIZE
THE DYING DICTATOR ORDERS HIS TOMB
(Conclusion of a longer poem)

. . . a ten-ton platinum eagle.
Upon the pediment (Hermann, you swore
It should be an old German mile in length)
Inscribe in Nieblung gold and *deutscher Schrift*
—Not the stiff Roman stuff Benito loved—
HERE LIES THE SIMPLE SAVIOUR OF HIS RACE
THINK ON HIS WORKS, YE LIBERALS, AND DESPAIR.
So through the centuries I'll lie and smile,
The *Liebestod* shall wake me all night long,
There I'll hear lesser Führers scuttle by
And ape my *Heldenleben*. But my friends,
Gauleiters, fighters, promise once again
My tomb *shall* be the hugest in the world
And break more banks than Josef's! Yet I fear
You mean to scrog my body into lime
And give it out that I am snitched to Heaven!
By Thor, you dare not! You're yet un-deGaussed
Against my magnetism! I've the force
To pitch the voice that sank ten thousand ships
And toss you all into a bloody purge!
Ah but I love you, Hermann . . . Help, my guards!

JOHN MAIR

SECOND PRIZE

Let's hear the future, you greybeard. No answer?
That does not surprise me.
Look how our Smooth-Tongue, the old necromancer,
Fearfully eyes me.
For are they—before consummation—such lovers
The neck and the axe-head?
How many rash prophets the morning discovers
Lying with backs red!
Doubt they predestinate godhead? A pistol
Soon answers their garble.
Note where that stain still—a rose bruised in crystal—
Clouds the clear marble.
So lest in the race I than time prove more mutable,
I can tell this to no man.
I have planned out a tomb in this paper inscrutable,
Sealed with my favourite Roman.
I'll just tell you—heap every jewel that's bright enough
With gold to support all.
No stone. Will it ever be warm enough, light enough
To house an immortal? N. LEWIS

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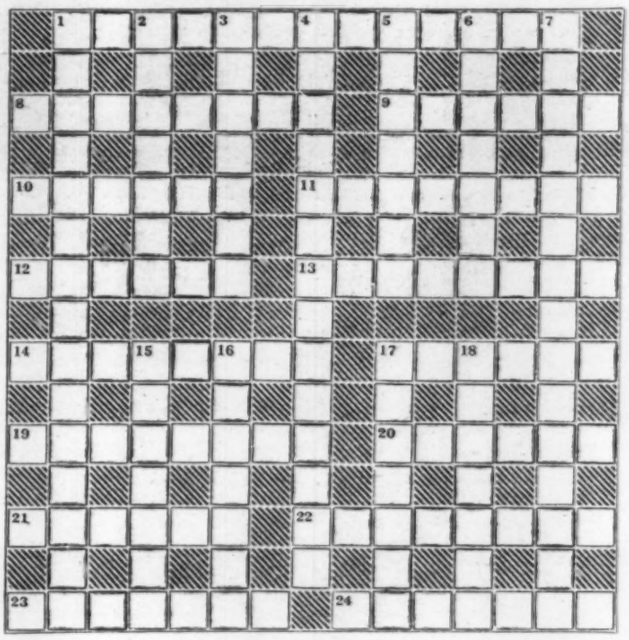
WEEK-END CROSSWORD 523

Books to the value of Five Shillings may be chosen by the sender of the first correct solution opened. Post solutions to arrive not later that first delivery Wednesday following the date of issue, addressed to "CROSSWORDS," 10 Great Turnstile, London, W.C.1.



Set by L.-S.

The last week's winner is

Miss Thomas, 22 Greengate, Stafford

ACROSS

1. Fruit just in case. (13)
8 (rev.). A dance behind the lines. (8)
9. The way of retirement. (6)
10 (rev.). You might listen in to them. (6)
11. They do the cross work in 7. (8)
12 (rev.). Ivories should be so affixed. (6)
13. They give an improper impression. (8)
14. Kitchen description of the skulls of those who are agitated. (8)
17. Where to strike while the iron's hot. (6)
19. Painted lady. (8)
20. So the Bellman would speak truth. (6)
21. A matter of qualification. (6)
22. Where the recipe for spotted dog came from? (8)
23. How newspapers are printed. (7)
24. Tasting 18. (7)

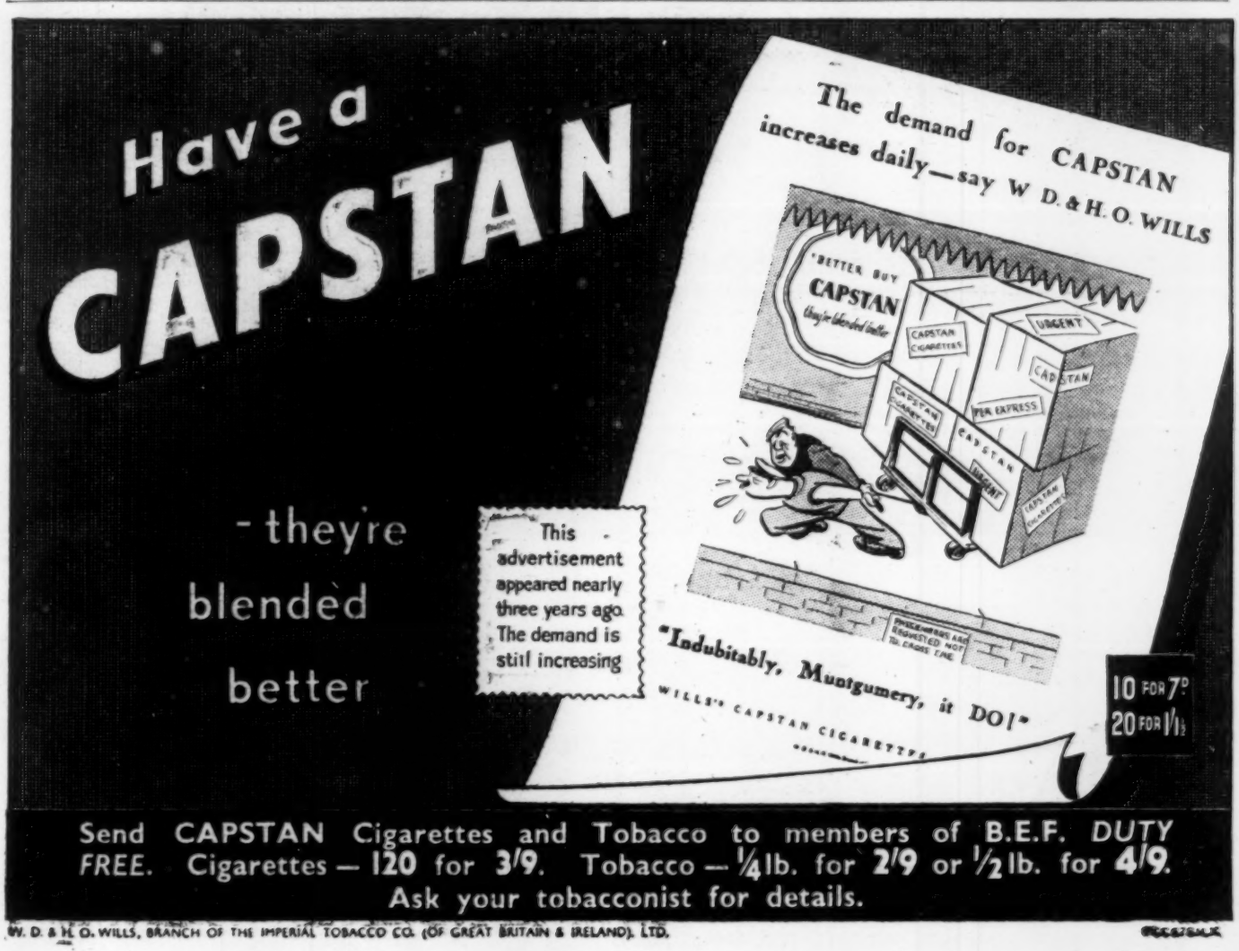
DOWN

1. He's no doubt a Digger, even if not an Anzac. (15)
2. Rational provision perhaps in these days. (7)
3. Arrange the stage in a 18 way. (7)
4. Where the Chamberlains' seats are reserved? (14)
5. Have a pint, Meg? (7)
6. He hopes that you will attend to him. (7)
7. Seems a choice officer. (15)
15. Biggest game hunters. (7)
16. Competent Allied acquaintance. (7)
17. Lost at a place of old romance. (7)
18. See 3 and 24. (7)

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

P	A	R	S	N	I	P	■	R	E	S	I	D	U	E
A	■	O	■	O	■	O	■	E	■	C	■	E	■	N
S	T	O	N	E	C	R	O	P	■	R	A	T	E	S
S	■	S	■	S	■	T	■	E	■	A	■	R	■	I
O	A	T	H	■	S	W	A	N	U	P	P	I	N	G
U	■	■	■	H	■	I	■	T	■	B	■	M	■	N
T	H	E	D	O	W	N	S	■	C	O	V	E	T	S
■	■	N	■	T	■	E	■	L	■	O	■	N	■	■
R	A	C	I	A	L	■	C	O	C	K	A	T	O	O
E	■	H	■	N	■	G	■	D	■	S	■	■	■	V
G	R	A	N	D	F	L	E	E	T	■	S	T	Y	E
A	■	N	■	C	■	I	■	S	■	A	■	O	■	R
L	O	T	T	O	■	D	A	T	E	P	A	L	M	S
E	■	E	■	L	■	E	■	A	■	E	■	E	■	E
S	T	R	I	D	E	S	■	R	O	S	E	T	T	A

NOTE:—Grand Fleet—"Spanish Ladies."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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By CYNICUS

RESULT OF THE NEW LOAN—AVOIDING MR. KEYNES—INVESTMENT CONSEQUENCES OF THE KEYNES PLAN

FAILURE was unthinkable with the first War Loan of the war and I believe that the large applications will be scaled down by about 10 per cent. When insurance companies like the Prudential apply for £5 millions and rich commercial companies like Distillers for £1 million the success of the Loan is assured from the outset. After all, it was not only a matter of patriotism but of good business to subscribe for a 3 per cent. fifteen-to-nineteen year loan at par when the fourteen-to-eighteen year National Defence 3 per cent. Loan was standing, before the issue, at 101¾. The new loan is bound to go in the course of time to 1 premium. In professional quarters in the City I have found weighty support for my view that the new loan was prematurely timed and priced too dearly for the Government. There is no doubt that if the Treasury had waited a few more months until the new private savings out of the increasing Government expenditures had accumulated in private pockets, and until more old savings brought back from America had been reinvested on the Stock Exchange, the gilt-edged market would have been higher. If the Treasury was able to issue a 2 per cent. Conversion Loan 1943/45 at par in exchange for the 4½ per cent. Conversion Loan it seemed obvious in the City that a 2¾ per cent. twelve-to-fifteen year loan could have been issued at par with complete success in a few months' time, that is if the war news does not become too depressing, as it has been this week.

* * *

The gilt-edged market is now completely under control, and whether or no the Keynes plan is adopted it is bound to move higher. The professional investor will naturally prefer to buy 3 per cent. Locals at 85⅝ to yield 3½ per cent. in view of the six points or so capital appreciation which is ahead. The small investor will no doubt prefer 3½ per cent. War Loan at 99½ to yield £3 10*s.* 6*d.*, because the interest is paid without deduction of tax at source, but this cannot have so much appreciation as 3 per cent. Locals. I might add, if the small investor has not yet handed any of his savings over to the Government, he should choose the 3 per cent. Defence Bonds before the new War Loan. Being repayable at 101 in seven years' time, the 3 per cent. Defence Bonds give a higher yield to redemption namely £3 4*s.* 3*d.* per cent. gross. 3 per cent. Defence Bonds have the additional attraction of being repayable in cash on six months' notice. But better even than 3 per cent. Defence Bonds are the new Savings Certificates which are free of tax. If the small investor does not object to reserving his interest during the ten-year life of these Savings Certificates he will obtain on redemption £3 3*s.* 5*d.* per cent. free of tax or the equivalent gross yield of £5 2*s.* 8*d.* per cent.

* * *

The explanation of the Government haste in issuing the new War Loan is either war scares about a spring offensive or the besetting fear of inflation—the fear lest prices should rise too quickly if the increased incomes of the war were left too long in the recipients' control. This is bad political funk—not sound economic advice. I suspect that it emanates not from Lord Stamp's advisory committee but from Sir John Simon's confession that he has no satisfactory or adequate alternative to Mr. Keynes' plan. It seems that the Government will do everything it can to avoid adopting the Keynes plan as a whole. Indeed, I cannot see the great Conservative Party which keeps the National Government in power, the party representing landed wealth and the vast accumulated fortunes, pledging itself in advance to a post-war capital levy. Mr. Keynes skated, I thought, very lightly over the dangerous ice of this political problem. What is open to the Government, of course, if it wishes to avoid Mr. Keynes, is to extend and stimulate the yield of voluntary savings. I came across further proof this week that this is Sir John Simon's present policy in a letter addressed to the insurance companies by the Bank of England—conveying the Government's wish that all fresh income (i.e. from premiums) and "all other available resources as far as possible" should be placed in Government funds. It is very proper that life premium income, representing the savings of the individual, should be invested in Government stocks, but this does not *force* the individual to apply more of his income to savings (or Government loans) as the Keynes plan would do. In other words, it is no alternative to Keynes. Voluntary savings will not fill the bill.

* * *

A correspondent asks me to discuss the investment consequences of the Keynes plan. To this somewhat academic question I must return an academic answer. Briefly, it is a "bull" point for the gilt-edged market, and for fixed interest securities in general, and a "bear" point for the equity share markets. If a proportion of the national income is to be diverted from normal spending into investment in Government funds, manufacturers of consumer or consumer-durable goods will lose trade and their profits will decline. Dividends on their equity shares will therefore be reduced. At the same time, dividends on the equity shares of the manufacturers of "war machine" goods, whose output will go up as the output of consumer goods goes down, will not be able to increase their dividends because of the inroads of taxation into their surpluses. Not only income tax but the N.D.C. charge on company profits and the excess profits tax may be substantially increased as the war is prolonged. I have argued many times that N.D.C. should be raised, so that the rich companies with a steady, old-established trade in consumer goods or services should make a more adequate contribution to war finance. I notice that Mr. Keynes looks with some favour on the proposal ventilated in these columns that if the excess profits tax is not to be increased above 60 per cent., the remaining 40 per cent. should be handed over to the Government as a forced loan. If this becomes part of the Keynes plan, the surpluses available for company shareholders must diminish as the war goes on. In other words, the trading risk must increase. This does not necessarily mean that all equity shares must fall. As the yield expected from equity shares is made up of the rate of interest plus the risk premium, a fall in the rate of interest will automatically widen the margin for the risk premium. So the market valuations of equity shares may well remain the same if the rate of interest factor falls as quickly as the risk factor rises. Nevertheless, I anticipate that the adoption of the Keynes plan would have a depressing effect upon equity shares, simply because it would depress market psychology.

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NEW STATESMAN AND NATION
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Company Meeting

THE NATIONAL MUTUAL LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY

THE HON. FRANCIS N. CURZON'S ADDRESS.

THE 110th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in London on March 13th, the Hon. Francis N. Curzon, chairman, presided and said (in part) :—

Twenty-five years ago my predecessor in this chair opened his annual speech with these words : " The outbreak of the European war renders the year under review a unique one in the history of our Society." To-day once again in our lifetime we are living through the agony of war, and all our energies, all our resources, and all our resolution must be directed to its successful prosecution. In these circumstances the question that most readily springs to our minds is, how has the onset of war affected the position and prosperity of our Society ? You will have seen from the Annual Report that the depreciation written off in 1939 amounting to £266,000 has reduced the Reserve Fund to £234,000. In addition to this, we carried forward £178,000 from 31st December, 1938, and the sum of these items, totalling £412,000, represents a free surplus equal to 6½ per cent. of the Society's actuarial liabilities on 31st December, 1938, quite apart from the substantial trading profits earned last year.

At the end of 1914 the estimated depreciation exceeded the amount carried forward from the valuation of 1913 and there was then no Reserve Fund. The basis now employed for the valuation of liabilities is more stringent than was the case a generation ago. We are entitled to contemplate this comparison with some satisfaction.

The war has put an effectual brake on the steady advance in our new business which has been a feature of former years. Indeed as you will have seen, the 1939 total is little more than one-half of the 1938 figure, so severe was the contraction of business in the last four months of 1939 ; and although business is now much more plentiful than it was we shall do well to maintain in 1940 even the reduced level of 1939. In this situation we look more than ever to our members and policyholders to assist us by means of introductions and recommendations in maintaining an adequate flow of new business.

The balance sheet quite clearly exhibits the changes which have taken place in our assets during the year. As regards Stock Exchange Securities your Board followed in the early part of last year a very cautious policy and the net investment up to the outbreak of war was on a very minor scale with the result that we were able to make relatively substantial purchases of high-class debentures at the attractive level of prices ruling in the last four months of the year.

The total depreciation on the year including a provision for possible losses on non-stock exchange assets, amounted to £266,000, equal to 3½ per cent. of our total assets. I am glad to say that all of it has already been recovered by the improvement in values since 31st December.

Your Board has recently been giving consideration to the best means of offering cover in this country against deaths arising from air raids. All our pre-war policies with insignificant exceptions are unrestricted, but, so far as new policies are concerned, we have hitherto, in common with other Companies, either excluded these risks or charged an appropriate extra premium. We have come to think this procedure for new with-profits policies may lead to results which fall short of that standard of equity which it is the especial privilege of mutual societies to uphold. For while existing arrangements fully protect pre-war entrants from mortality losses arising from home war risk claims, the normal principle of equal bonuses alike for pre-war and wartime entrants would expose the latter to the possibility of a lower bonus by reason of claims to which their own policies (since the risk is excluded) cannot contribute. In these circumstances we have decided to offer this cover for with-profits policies at the normal rates of premiums and to allow the impact of any of these war-risk claims to be taken by their bonus fund ; or in other words to withhold bonuses from wartime entrants on the understanding that they may be restored in whole or in part if the actual experience permits.

The year under review is not an occasion for a valuation and distribution of profits, though you will no doubt be glad to know that our usual internal valuation indicates that profits as a whole have been maintained. In fixing interim bonuses to be paid on claims this year on the reduced scale referred to in the annual report we have been guided more by the need for caution in the face of an uncertain future than by the current profit earning capacity which indeed would have permitted of interim bonuses much closer to the peacetime level. This note of caution is one which recurs in all our operations. For the conduct of a mutual life assurance society is in the nature of a trust ; a trust to the past as represented by our existing policyholders, and also to the future, obliging us to recognise our responsibility to the community by which we live in offering life assurance protection, as complete and as free from restrictions as possible, and on the most favourable possible terms. It is in that spirit that the Society looks forward to playing its part in war conditions as it has done for so long, and not I think unworthily, in times of peace.

The report and accounts were unanimously adopted.

STRENGTH . . . . SECURITY

Extracts from the 87th Annual Report to be presented to the Shareholders at the Annual General Meeting at Halifax on Monday April 1st, 1940

ADVANCED ON MORTGAGES	... ...	£12,612,343
MORTGAGE ASSETS	... ...	£106,519,832
LIQUID ASSETS	in Trustee Securities	£15,528,696
	Cash at Banks and in Hand	£6,407,696
TOTAL ASSETS	... ...	£129,137,993
SHARE AND DEPOSIT FUNDS	... ...	£122,780,373

PROFITS—The balance of profit for the year after making provision for all management expenses, Income-Tax, National Defence Contribution, and interest due to Depositors up to the date of the accounts and for depreciation amounted to £3,216,122. Appropriations have been made to Investing Shareholders of Interest and Bonus £2,831,628 ; General Reserve Fund £325,000 and Staff Superannuation Fund £50,000.

TOTAL RESERVE FUNDS AND UNDIVIDED PROFIT £5,800,584

COPY OF BALANCE SHEET FREE ON APPLICATION

HEAD OFFICES—HALIFAX GENERAL MANAGERS—DAVID W. SMITH, F.C.I.S. F. E. WARBRECK HOWELL, LL.D.

LONDON DISTRICT OFFICE—HALIFAX HOUSE, STRAND, W.C.2 CITY OFFICE—62, MOORGATE, E.C.2

BIRMINGHAM - - 26-28, COLMORE ROW
BELFAST - 14, DONEGALL SQUARE WEST
EDINBURGH - - 75, GEORGE STREET
GLASGOW - - 119, ST. VINCENT STREET
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